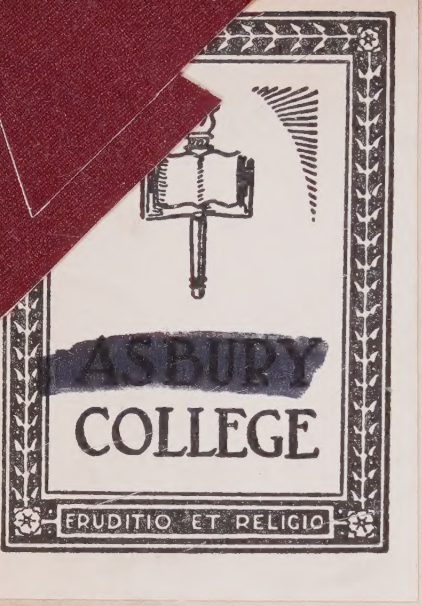
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TYPES OF WORLD TRAGEDY

EDITED BY

ROBERT METCALF SMITH, PH.D.

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

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DEDICATED TO THE STUDENTS OF MISSOURI, COLORADO, WYOMING AND PENNSYLVANIA WHO HAVE ENJOYED READING TRAGEDY WITH ME

FOREWORD

The dramas in this volume have been chosen to illustrate the varying conceptions of tragedy from the classical art of the Greeks to the naturalism of the modern era. Those who believe that there is no tragedy worthy of the name since the Greeks will be content with *Œdipus* and the *Medea;* those who believe that Shakespeare is matchless will not cavil at *Othello;* and those who think that all art previous to the twentieth century is hopelessly antiquated may take their pleasure with Hauptmann and Gorki. It is hoped, however, that a comparative study of these types will insure a deeper insight into the nature of tragic art.

The critical prefaces have been written as introductions to tragic theory for students who are beginning their acquaintance with Aristotle and drama, and who need guidance through the philosophies of tragedy as variously conceived by ancients and moderns. Stress has been placed upon the emotional values by which, as Aristotle taught, the greatness of the appeal of tragic art can be determined. An effort has been made to avoid the exclusively historical point of view, which still dominates most teaching of the drama. It seems a false sense of values to confine a student, who perhaps will take only one literature course in his entire college career, to plays chiefly of historical interest within a restricted period, when he should have read before graduation the great plays of recognized dramatic or poetic power. To teach literature exclusively as a branch of history is to pursue the handmaid rather than the bride, to worship Clio rather than Melpomene.

The introductions, therefore, minimize history, which teachers can readily supply by lectures, or by assigned readings, and emphasize literary and critical values. Firmness of tone

has been intentionally adopted, partly for pedagogical economy, and partly to arouse discussion and dissent. It may not be too much to hope that students reading these plays will obtain not only a critical perspective, but, outgrowing sophomoric whim and pose, achieve that catholic spirit which appreciates each tragedy for the elements of greatness that it reveals.

I am glad to acknowledge with gratitude the kind permission of Sir Gilbert Murray, and the Oxford University Press to reprint the unrivalled translation of the *Medea* of Euripides; of William Heinemann, Ltd., London, for Mary Morison's translation of Hauptmann's *The Weavers,* and of The Four Seas Company for Edwin Hopkins' translation of Gorki's *The Lower Depths.*

To my colleagues I am indebted as follows: Professor Myron J. Luch for corrections and revisions, and Mr. Howard G. Rhoads for writing the Appendix, part of the introduction to *Othello,* and the whole of the introduction to *The Cenci,* as well as for constant advice and assistance in the preparation of the manuscript. Professor C. L. Townsend of Southwestern College has also graciously given the manuscript the benefit of his comprehensive knowledge of the drama.

ROBERT METCALF SMITH.

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INTRODUCTION TO GREEK TRAGEDY

The Nature of the Greek Drama.

It is generally thought that the Greek drama developed out of the choric chants and festival dances in celebration of the god Dionysus. The chorus, which later became the nucleus of Greek drama, was wont to dance about the altar of the god, and to produce scenes in his honor from the lives of ancient heroes. Out of the chorus grew a leader, who became the first actor; and then dialogue naturally developed between the chorus and the actor. Æschylus is said to have introduced a second actor, a technical device which increased the possibilities of dialogue and dramatic interchange; Sophocles added a third actor. In the drama of the Greeks, accordingly, though there may be many characters in the play, there are only two or three actors on the stage at one time.

The actors of a tragedy wore long flowing robes, masks, and buskins. The masks precluded the modern actor's arts of individualization and facial expression; the buskins, or boots with soles several inches high, which were worn to elevate the performers lest they appear diminutive in the vast Greek theaters, made impossible any rapid or violent actions. The action on the Greek stage, therefore, of necessity conformed to Greek æsthetic taste; it was stately and dignified. Violent scenes were not exhibited; murders, suicides, or horrible incidents like that of Œdipus gouging out his eyes with Jocasta's brooches, took place off-stage and were reported by a messenger or an actor.

The most illuminating commentary on Greek tragedy, is the *Poetics* of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.); and it has been the most influential treatise of dramatic criticism in the world. Fragmentary as it is, it includes, nevertheless, an analysis of Tragedy, a slighter treatment of Comedy, and a discussion of the Epic. A student of drama should become thoroughly

familiar with Aristotle's discourse by consulting S. H. Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (Macmillan, New York, 1923); I. Bywater's *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry* (Oxford, 1909) and Lane Cooper's translation and commentary (Ginn, Boston, 1913).

The Three Unities.

Many of the Greek dramas observe the three unities—unity of action, as prescribed in the *Poetics* of Aristotle; unity of time, which means "confined to a single revolution of the sun (24 hours), or slightly in excess of this limit"; and unity of place (not mentioned by Aristotle), which means that the whole action is confined to one setting. Aristotle did not lay down these unities as rules for dramatic writing. Through the influence of Italian Renaissance commentators on Aristotle, the three unities later became hard and fast laws that dominated dramatic theory and practice in England and France for nearly four hundred years. Aristotle's *Poetics* became, in Dryden's phrase, "the longest tyranny that ever swayed". Aristotle was describing the practice of the Attic drama as he witnessed it, however, and was not trying to establish a fixed canon of dramatic rules. Had he been able to observe the plays of Shakespeare, Dryden says, "he might have changed his mind". Nevertheless, a drama that is able to observe the unities and to avoid what William Archer calls "a broken-backed action, whether in time or space", gains in symmetry, directness, simplicity, concentration, and totality of effect. Even for the drama of our own times the unities are dramatic economies. Part of the enthralling power of Ibsen's *Ghosts* lies in its unity of dramatic effect. Ibsen, in this play, not only observed unity of action, and place, but also reduced the time to less than 24 hours.

The plot, which Aristotle holds to be the soul of tragedy, must be logical and convincing, but need not be, in the modern sense of realism, an exact copy of life. It should, he says, "portray not what has happened, but what may happen according to the law of probability or necessity". "A probable impossibility is to be preferred to a thing improbable and yet possible". He not only leaves room for the imaginative possibilities of life; he even admits the impossible, provided that

the dramatist justifies it "by reference to artistic requirements or to the higher reality or to received opinion". The dramatist, in imitating an action, should make a likeness which is true to life and yet more beautiful. The ideal imitation must surpass the reality. Sophocles, he records, drew men as they ought to be; Euripides, as they are. We shall find Gorki in his quest for the natural, rather than the ideal, depicting men as worse than they are.

The Nature of Tragedy.

Tragedy, according to Aristotle, is the imitation of an action that is serious and complete, and that has magnitude; embellished by poetic language; in dramatic, not in narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear; and accomplishing a catharsis, or purging of these emotions.

By *serious* Aristotle means an action not ludicrous or morally trivial, such as might be suitable for comedy and farce; by *complete* he means a unified action, a selected series of events with a definite beginning, middle and end; by *magnitude,* an action of great scope and significance above the ordinary. It should be written in an elevated poetic style with rhythm, harmony, or song; the incidents chosen must arouse pity and fear. The test of a tragedy lies in its capacity to arouse both pity *and* fear; not one *or* the other. Tragic pity is the feeling we experience in watching the sufferings of a person who is enduring a misfortune *greater* than he deserves; tragic fear is occasioned by witnessing a misfortune befalling a person *like ourselves* in human qualities. In fearing for him we fear for ourselves. The two emotions of pity and fear, so interpreted, are indeed very nearly the same thing in that we pity others where, under like circumstances, we should fear for ourselves. Fear chastens the pity and prevents it from becoming, through excess, either maudlin or sentimental. To Aristotle and the Greeks the word *pity* connoted an inverted self-love, and self-fear; they had little philanthropy, what we call brotherly love, or general humanitarian sympathy. An Achilles, to be sure, could be moved to pity and generosity at the figure of his abject enemy, King Priam, creeping in to ask for the body of his son Hector, but he would not have understood the modern ambition of one of

Galsworthy's characters "to love every living thing". This modern humanitarian pity, more accurately termed pathos, may be found in appealing form, for example, in Synge's *Riders to the Sea.* This little classic is pathetic, not tragic, since the spectacle of a wholly good mother victimized by the sea arouses a general unselfish sympathy rather than tragic pity and fear for ourselves.

Pity, the Greeks realized, is a fickle and dangerous emotion. "Pity having played, soon tires". Or if it becomes maudlin and sentimental through excess, it depresses and weakens us; it is too often a sort of luxury of compassion in which we revel without much thought of how to alleviate distress by action. We become, like Jacques, prone to sit down, "and rail against our mistress the world, and all our misery". If, on the other hand, pity spurs us into sudden action, our impulsive deed may cause further havoc for want of discretion. "Tenderness oft mars the chime of wisest counsels".

Part of the censure brought against the plays of Euripides by his contemporaries may be due to his departure from tragedy into the ways of pathos. Professor Gilbert Murray, in his note on *The Trojan Women* of Euripides, which he calls "the first great expression of the spirit of pity for mankind exalted into a moving principle", points out that pity is a rebel passion. Its hand is against the strong, against the organized force of society, against conventional sanctions and accepted gods. "It is the Kingdom of Heaven within us fighting against the brute power of the world; and it is apt to have those qualities of unreason, of contempt for the counting of costs and the balancing of sacrifices, of recklessness, and even, in the last resort, of ruthlessness, which so often mark the paths of heavenly things and the doings of the children of light. It brings not peace, but a sword". Hence, though pity may be a divine compassion which renders even the badness of things half lovable, it is likely to care little for the greater virtue of justice. Pericles, too, understood the danger of this emotion, for when he was exhorting the Athenians to defend the state, he warned: "Do not be misled by the three most deadly enemies of the empire, Pity, and Eloquent Sentiments, and the Generosity of Strength!" Modern tragedy, in which pity is too often dissociated from fear, sinks into pathos and

tends, as Plato would have objected, to water the emotions and weaken our sensibilities rather than to chasten or purify them. Great tragedy, on the contrary, does not merely bring tears to every eye but "soars to a lofty expanse where tears are useless, and only dry-eyed fear and awe can dwell". Only the greatest tragedies in this book, the Œdipus, and the Othello can be said fully to meet this test.

The purpose of arousing specifically these two emotions, which distinguish tragedy from other arts, is to cleanse or purge away the emotions of pity and fear which are present in human beings to a disquieting degree. According to Bywater the tragic spectacle acts as a cleansing which lightens and relieves the spectator of his accumulated emotion, the process of the relief being attended by a harmless satisfaction.[1] An example of the truth of Aristotle's definition is afforded by a country doctor, who on witnessing the terrifying struggles of Othello, was heard to exclaim: "Poor devil, I'm glad I'm not in his shoes". In this utterance we find the mingled self-directed pity, fear, and relief which Aristotle analyzed as constituting tragic effect.

To produce real tragedy, three kinds of plot must be avoided: (1) a good person must not be depicted passing from happiness to misery, as for example, Job of the Bible, an upright man who is suddenly deprived of all he has, and then afflicted with personal indignities; nor (2) a bad person rising from misery to success, for example, Medea in Euripides' play of that name, a wicked woman triumphant in revenge. Both of these actions offend or revolt us, and do not inspire either fear or pity; nor (3) a bad man falling from prosperity to misfortune, for example, Richard III; the suffering of such a man as quite in accord with his wickedness creates in us a feeling of justice rather than tragic pity and fear. A great tragedy must depict then, a man neither superlatively good, nor superlatively bad, nor one whose misfortune comes as the result of deliberate sin or wicked intent, but one who is brought low through some flaw, like an error of judgment or blindness of impulse, an imperfect knowledge or natural temper or pride, or other human limitation; one

[1] For other interpretations of Catharsis, see Butcher (Chap. VI), and Bywater (p. 159 ff.).

who belongs to the number of those highly renowned or prosperous. The greatness of tragedy is dependant upon the greatness of the tragic hero—the greater the hero, the greater the disaster of his fall, or as Shakespeare says,

"A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
Past speaking of in a king!" (*Lear* IV, 6, 208-9)

In judging Greek tragedy one must draw a sharp distinction between the Oriental, the Hellenic, and the Christian points of view. The Greeks conceived mankind as living in a universe ruled by an abstract Power or Force, *Anangke,* stern Necessity, or *Adrasteia,* the Irresistible. This idea of Destiny is represented sometimes by the gods, or Zeus, sometimes by a Nemesis or divine justice, *Dike,* to which even the gods were subject. This conception of fate must not be confused with blind Oriental fatalism which depresses effort, darkens the soul and calls forth only the courage of despair. Because the Greeks conceived the universe as moral, they lived in apprehension of giving offense to the Divine. They directed their efforts, therefore, towards placating the gods and sometimes succeeded, as in the reconciliation of Orestes; they did not, like the Oriental, passively murmur Kismet, nor like the Christian inflict upon themselves the tortures of Christian conscience. The tragic flaws of the heroes in Greek Drama are not, as in the Shakespearean, to be interpreted as wilful sins. A Greek would not have cried out like Richard III in his tent on Bosworth Field:

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree
Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree:
All several sins, all used in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all, 'Guilty! Guilty!'"

Lest he offend the gods, the Greek would say:

"Wisdom is theirs who Adrasteia worship".

One of the greatest ways of giving offense was by indulgence in overweening pride that set itself in opposition to the divine

will. The gods were moved by envy at such a one, and presently punished or destroyed him by contriving that his errors and frailties should contribute to his downfall. "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad". So Œdipus, though well intentioned, yet destined by the oracles to suffer for the sins of his parents, by killing the father and marrying the mother, plucks on his own fate by natural errors, rather than by wilful sins; his unwitting murder of Laios; his pride over his achievements in solving the riddle of the sphinx; his doubts of the oracle, his rash curse, his indignation at Teiresias, his unjust accusations against Teiresias and Creon and his banishment of Creon; his persistent application of "that fatal knife, deep questioning, which probes to endless dole", and which rushes him to his doom; his desperate gouging of his eyes. There is likewise the pride of Jocasta in scorning the decrees of the oracles. These flaws of natural temper and human pride elicit from the chorus the warning:

"Pride filled with many thoughts, yet filled in vain,
Untimely, ill-advised,
Scaling the topmost height,
Falls to the abyss of woe,
* * * * * *
O that 'twere mine to keep
An awful purity,
In words and deeds whose laws on high are set
Through heaven's clear æther spread".

Fate brings low in Œdipus a man not wholly just nor wholly wicked, one like ourselves but greater, who is caught in the toils of a decree of destiny and suffers more than he deserves, but not because of any wilful vice or moral depravity. "The whole play," says Mahaffy, "is a terrible exhibition of the iron course of Fate, which ensnares even great and good men in its adamantine chains, and ruins the highest prosperity with calm omnipotence". If Œdipus, the King, because of the disobedience of his parents, suffers a fate far more terrible than he deserves, even though he has partially plucked it on, how are the workings of the gods just? In spite of all the injustices man suffers from a cruel universe,

both Æschylus and Sophocles believed that the ways of the gods are just though they be hidden; the pains and sufferings of men are educative, and bring wisdom. Destiny in the end will be found law-abiding.

The religious faith of Sophocles in the justice of the universe is not apparent in *Œdipus the King;* this play fills us with pity and terror at an unjust fate. In the later play, *Œdipus Coloneus,* Sophocles portrays Œdipus after banishment and further sufferings resigned to the ways of the gods and going to a wondrous death in the spirit:

> "Let lamentation be brief
> For what has happened was ordained".

References.

Suggestive treatments of tragic theory will be found in P. H. Frye, *Romance and Tragedy* (Marshall Jones, Boston, 1922); W. Macneill Dixon, *Tragedy* (Arnold, London, 1925); C. E. Vaughn, *Types of Tragic Drama,* (Macmillan, New York, 1921); W. L. Courtney, *The Idea of Tragedy* (1900). For studies of Greek tragedy, see G. L. Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life;* J. A. Symonds, *The Greek Poets* (2 vols.) (Harpers, New York); J. P. Mahaffy, *The History of Classical Greek Literature* (2 vols.) (Harpers, New York, 1885) Lewis Campbell, *Tragic Drama in Æschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare* (John Murray, London, 1904); L. M. Watt, *Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy* (Dutton, New York, 1908); A. E. Haigh, *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks; The Attic Theater.* Two essays emphasizing free agency in Greek philosophy and drama are: *Free Will in Greek Literature* by Abby Leach, and *Œdipus Rex: A Typical Greek Tragedy* in Lane Cooper's *The Greek Genius and Its Influence,* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1917); Gilbert Murray, *History of Ancient Greek Literature* (Appleton, New York, 1912).

ŒDIPUS THE KING

BY

SOPHOCLES

(c. 429 B.C.)

Translated by

E. H. PLUMPTRE, D.D.

TEXT OF THE PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ŒDIPUS, *King of Thebes*

CREON, *brother of* JOCASTA

TEIRESIAS, *a soothsayer*

PRIEST OF ZEUS

MESSENGER from Corinth

SHEPHERD

SECOND MESSENGER

JOCASTA, *wife of* ŒDIPUS

CHORUS *of Priests and Suppliants*

ŒDIPUS THE KING

ARGUMENT.—*Laios, King of Thebes, married Jocasta, daughter of Menœkeus, and they had no child. And he, grieved thereat, sought counsel of the God at Delphi, and the God bade him cease to wish for children, for should a son be born to him, by that son he should surely die.*[1] *And then it came to pass that Jocasta bare him a son. And they, fearing the God's word, gave the boy to a shepherd, that he might cast it out upon the hill Kithæron; and so they were comforted, and deemed that they by this device had turned the oracle into a thing of nought. And thirty years afterwards, when Laios was well stricken in years, he went again on a pilgrimage to Delphi; and thence he never came back again, —slain on the way, men knew not by whose hands. And at that time the Sphinx made havoc of Thebes and all the coasts thereof, so that they had no heart nor power to search into the matter of the king's death, but sought only for some one to answer the monster's riddle,*[2] *and save the city and its people. And a stranger came to the city, Œdipus of Corinth, son, as it was said, of Polybos and Merope, and answered the riddle*

---

[1] THE ORACLE TO LAIOS.
Laios, Labdacos' son, thou askest for birth of fair offspring;
Lo! I will give thee a son, but know that Destiny orders
That thou by the boy's hand must die, for so to the curses of Pelops,
Whom of his son thou hast robbed, Zeus, son of Kronos, hath granted,
And he, in his trouble of heart, called all this sorrow upon thee.

[2] THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX.
There lives upon earth a being, two-footed, yea, and with four feet,
Yea, and with three feet, too, yet his voice continues unchanging;
And, lo! of all things that move in earth, in heaven, or in ocean,
He only changes his nature, and yet when on most feet he walketh,
Then is the speed of his limbs most weak and utterly powerless.

aright[3] *and slew the Sphinx. And then the people of the city in their joy chose Œdipus as their king, in the room of Laios, who had been slain; and Jocasta took him as her husband, and Creon, Jocasta's brother, was his chief friend and counselor, and all things prospered with him, and he had two sons and two daughters. But soon the wrath of God fell upon Thebes, and the city was visited with a sore pestilence; and the people turned in their affliction to their gods, and made their supplications.*[4]

---

[3] ANSWER OF ŒDIPUS.

Hear thou against thy will, thou dark-winged Muse of the slaughtered,
Hear from my lips the end, bringing a close to thy crime:
Man is it thou hast described, who, when on earth he appeareth,
First as a babe from the womb, four-footed creeps on his way,
Then when old age cometh on, and the burden of years weighs full heavy,
Bending his shoulders and neck, as a third foot useth his staff.

[4] The starting-point of the cycle of Œdipus' legends is found in the Odyssey, xi. 271, where Odysseus describes the spectres that he saw in Hades:—

"And there I looked on Epicasta's form,
Mother of Œdipus, who, knowing not,
Wrought greatest guilt, her own son marrying:
And he his father slew, and married her.
But soon the Gods disclosed it all to men,
And he, with many woes, in Thebes beloved,
Through fateful counsels of the Gods, ruled long
O'er the Cadmeians. She, with woe outworn,
To Hades went, strong warder of the dead,
A long noose letting down from lofty roof.
And many a woe she left behind to him.
Which the Erinnyes of his mother work."

With this it will be interesting to compare Pindar, Olymp., ii. 35-42:—

"So Destiny, who keeps of olden time
The goodly fortune of an honoured race,
With prosperous years from God,
Leads it another while
Backward to bale and woe;
E'en when the faithful son of Laios killed
The father whom he met,
And so fulfilled
The Oracle in Pytho given of old,
And seeing it, she slew,
Erinnyes, clear of sight,
The warrior race, with fratricidal hand."

Æschylos (B.C. 471) had made it the subject of a Trilogy, tracing

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SCENE.—THEBES. *In the background, the palace of* ŒDIPUS; *in front, the altar of* ZEUS, *Priests and Boys round it in the attitude of suppliants, with olive and laurel branches in their hands, entwined with woollen threads.*

[*Enter* ŒDIPUS.]

ŒDIPUS. Why sit ye here, my children, youngest brood
Of Cadmos famed of old, in solemn state,
Your hands thus wreathèd with the suppliants' boughs?
And all the city reeks with incense smoke,
And all re-echoes with your hymns and groans;
And I, my children, counting it unmeet
To hear report from others, I have come
Myself, whom all name Œdipus the Great.—
Do thou, then, agèd Sire, since thine the right
To speak for these, tell clearly how ye stand,
In terror or submission; speak to me
As willing helper. Heartless should I be
To see you prostrate, thus, and feel no ruth.

PRIEST. Yea, Œdipus, thou ruler of my land,
Thou seest our age, who sit as suppliants, bowed
Around thine altars; some as yet too weak
For distant flight, and some weighed down with age,
Priest, I, of Zeus, and these the chosen youth:
And in the market-places of the town
The people sit and wail, with wreath in hand,
By the two shrines of Pallas,[5] or the grave,
Where still the seer Ismenos prophesies,
For this our city, as thine eyes may see,
Is sorely tempest-tossed, nor lifts its head

---

the working of the curse in *Laios, Œdipus, the Seven against Thebes,* of which only the last is extant.

The date of composition is uncertain. Hypotheses, which connect the description of the plague at Thebes with that at Athens in B.C. 429, or the protests against impiety with the mutilation of the Hermæ in B.C. 415, are at best uncertain.

[5] Probably, as at Athens, Athena had two temples as Polias and Parthenos, so also at Thebes there were two shrines dedicated to her under different names, as Onkæa and Ismenia.

From out the surging sea of blood-flecked waves,
All smitten in the ripening blooms of earth,
All smitten in the herds that graze the fields,
Yea, and in timeless births of woman's fruit;
And still the God, fire-darting Pestilence,
As deadliest foe, upon our city swoops,
And desolates the home where Cadmos dwelt,
And Hades dark grows rich in sighs and groans.
It is not that we deem of thee as one
Equaled with gods in power, that we sit here,
These little ones and I, as suppliants prone;
But, judging thee, in all life's shifting scenes,
Chiefest of men, yea, and of chiefest skill
In communings with Heaven. For thou did'st come
And freed'st the city, named of Cadmos old,
From the sad tribute which of yore we paid
To that stern songstress,[6] all untaught of us,
And all unprompted; but by gift of God,
Men think and say, thou did'st our life upraise,
And now, dear Œdipus, most honored lord,
We pray thee, we thy suppliants, find for us
Some succor, whether voice of any God,
Or any man brings knowledge to thy soul;
For still I see, with those whom life has trained
To long-tried skill, the issues of their thoughts
Live and are mighty. Come then, noblest one,
Raise up our city; come, take heed to it;
As yet this land, for all thy former zeal,
Calls thee its savior: do not give us cause
So to remember this thy reign, as men
Who having risen, then fall low again;
But raise our state to safety. Omens good
Were then with thee; thou did'st thy work, and now
Be equal to thyself! If thou wilt rule,
As thou dost sway, this land wherein we dwell,

[6] The tribute of human victims paid to the Sphinx, the "Muse of the slaughtered," till her riddle was solved by Œdipus.

'Twere better far to rule o'er living men
Than o'er a realm dispeopled. Nought avails,
Or tower or ship, when men are not within.

ŒDIPUS. O children, wailing loud, ye come with wish
Well-known, not unknown; well I know that ye
Are smitten, one and all, with taint of plague,
And yet though smitten, none that taint of plague
Feels, as I feel it. Each his burden bears,
His own and not another's; but my heart
Mourns for the state, for you, and for myself;
And, lo, ye wake me not as plunged in sleep,
But find me weeping, weeping many tears,
And treading many paths in wandering thought;
And that one way of health I, seeking, found,
This have I acted on. Menœkeus' son,
Creon, my kinsman, have I sent to seek
The Pythian home of Phœbos, there to learn
The words or deeds wherewith to save the state;
And even now I measure o'er the time,
And ask, "How fares he?" grieving, for he stays,
Most strangely, far beyond the appointed day;
But when he comes, I should be base indeed,
Failing to do whate'er the God declares.

PRIEST. Well hast thou spoken! And these bring me word,
That Creon comes advancing on his way.

ŒDIPUS. O king Apollo, may he come with chance
That brings deliverance, as his looks are bright.

PRIEST. If one may guess, he's glad. He had not come
Crowned with rich wreaths [7] of fruitful laurel else.

ŒDIPUS. Soon we shall know. Our voice can reach him now.
Say, prince, our well-beloved, Menœkeus' son,
What sacred answer bring'st thou from the God?

[*Enter* CREON.]

[7] Creon, coming from Delphi, wears a wreath of the Parnassian laurel, its red berries mingling with the dark, glossy leaves.

CREON. A right good answer! E'en our evil plight,
If all goes well, may end in highest good.
ŒDIPUS. What were the words? Nor full of eager hope,
Nor trembling panic, list I to thy speech.
CREON. I, if thou wish, am ready, these being by,
To tell thee all, or go within the gates.
ŒDIPUS. Speak out to all. I sorrow more for them
Than for the woe which touches me alone.
CREON. I then will speak what from the god I heard:
King Phœbos bids us chase the plague away
(The words were plain) now cleaving to our land,
Nor cherish guilt which still remains unhealed.
ŒDIPUS. But with what rites? And what the deed itself?
CREON. Or drive far off or blood for blood repay;
That guilt of blood is blasting all the state.
ŒDIPUS. But whose fate is it that He pointeth to?
CREON. Once, O my king, ere thou did'st guide our state,
Our sovereign Laios ruled o'er all the land.
ŒDIPUS. So have I heard, for him I never saw.
CREON. Now the God clearly bids us, he being dead,
To take revenge on those who shed his blood.
ŒDIPUS. Yes; but where are they? How to track the course
Of guilt all shrouded in the doubtful past?
CREON. In this our land, so said He; those who seek
Shall find; unsought, we lose it utterly.
ŒDIPUS. Was it at home, or in the field, or else
In some strange land that Laios met his doom?
CREON. He went, so spake he, pilgrim-wise afar,
And never more came back as forth he went.
ŒDIPUS. Was there no courier, none who shared his road,
Who knew what, learning, one might turn to good?
CREON. Dead were they all, save one who fled for fear,
And he knew nought to tell but one small fact.
ŒDIPUS. [*Interrupting.*] And what was that? One fact might teach us much,
Had we but one small starting-point of hope.

CREON. He used to tell that robbers fell on him,
Not man for man, but with outnumbering force.

ŒDIPUS. How could the robber e'er have dared this deed,
Unless some bribe from hence had tempted him?

CREON. So men might think; but Laios having died,
There was no helper for us in our ills.

ŒDIPUS. What ill then hindered, when your sovereignty
Had fallen thus, from searching out the truth?

CREON. The Sphinx, with her dark riddle, bade us look
At nearer facts, and leave the dim obscure.

ŒDIPUS. Well, be it mine to track them to their source.
Right well hath Phœbos, and right well hast thou,
Shown for the dead your care, and ye shall find,
As is most meet, in me a helper true,
Aiding at once my country and the God.
It is not for the sake of friends remote,
But for mine own, that I dispel this pest;
For he that slew him, whosoe'er he be,
Will wish, perchance, with such a blow to smite
Me also. Helping him, I help myself.
And now, my children, rise with utmost speed
From off these steps, and raise your suppliant boughs;
And let another call my people here,
The race of Cadmos, and make known that I
Will do my taskwork to the uttermost;
So, as God wills, we prosper, or we fail.

PRIEST. Rise then, my children, 'twas for this we came,
For these good tidings which those lips have brought,
And Phœbos, who hath sent these oracles,
Pray that He come to save, and heal our plague.

[*Exeunt* CREON, *Priest, and Suppliants, the latter taking their boughs from the altar and bearing them as they march in procession.*]

[*Enter Chorus of* Theban Citizens.]

Strophe I

Chorus. O word of Zeus,[8] glad-voiced, with what intent
From Pytho, bright with gold,
Cam'st thou to Thebes, our city of high fame?
For lo! I faint for fear,
Through all my soul I quiver in suspense,
(Hear, Io Pæn! God of Delos,[9] hear!)
In brooding dread, what doom, of present growth,
Or as the months roll on, thy hand will work;
Tell me, O deathless Voice, thou child of golden hope!

Antistrophe I

Thee first, Zeus-born Athena, thee I call,
Divine and deathless One,
And next thy sister, Goddess of our land,
Our Artemis, who sits,
Queen of our market, on encircled throne;
And Phœbos, the far-darter! O ye Three,[10]
Shine on us, and deliver us from ill!
If e'er before, when storms of woe oppressed,
Ye stayed the fiery tide, O come and help us now!

Strophe II

Ah me, ah me, for sorrows numberless
Press on my soul;
And all the host is smitten, and our thoughts
Lack weapons to resist.
For increase fails of fruits of goodly earth,
And women sink in childbirth's wailing pangs,
And one by one, as flit

---

[8] The oracle, though given by Apollo, is yet the voice of Zeus, of whom Apollo is but the prophet, spokesman.

[9] Apollo, born in Delos, passed through Attica to Pytho, his shrine at Delphi.

[10] The Three named—Athena, Artemis, Phœbos—were the guardian deities of Thebes; but the tendency to bring three names together in one group in oaths and invocations runs through Greek worship generally.

The swift-winged birds through air,
So, flitting to the shore of Him who dwells
Down in the darkling West,[11]
Fleeter than mightiest fire,
Thou see'st them passing on.

ANTISTROPHE II

Yea, numberless are they who perish thus;
And on the earth,
Still breeding plague, unpitied infants lie,
Cast out all ruthlessly;
And wives and mothers, gray with hoary age,
Some here, some there, by every altar mourn,
With woe and sorrow crushed,
And chant their wailing plaint.
Clear thrills the sense their solemn Pæan cry,
And the sad anthem song;
Hear, golden child of Zeus,
And send us bright-eyed help.

STROPHE III

And Ares the destroyer drive away![12]
Who now, though hushed the din
Of brazen shield and spear,
With fiercest battle-cry
Wars on me mightily.
Bid him go back in flight,
Retreat from this our land,
Or to the ocean bed,
Where Amphitrite sleeps,
Or to that haven of the homeless sea
Which sweeps the Thracian shore.[13]

[11] Pluto, dwelling where the sun sinks into darkness. The symbolism of the West as the region of dead and evil, of the East as that of light and truth, belongs to the earliest parables of nature.

[12] The Pestilence, previously personified, is now identified with Ares, the God of slaughter, and, as such, the foe of the more benign deities.

[13] The Chorus prays that the pestilence may be driven either to the far western ocean, beyond the pillars of Heracles, the couch of

If waning night spares aught,
That doth the day assail:
Do thou, then, Sire almighty,
Wielding the lightning's strength,
Blast him with thy dread fiery thunderbolts.

ANTISTROPHE III

And thou, Lykeian king, the wolf's dread foe,
Fain would I see thy darts
From out thy golden bow
Go forth invincible,
Helping and bringing aid;
And with them, winged with fire,
The rays of Artemis,
With which on Lykian hills,
She moveth on her course.
And last, O golden-crowned, I call on thee,
Named after this our land,[14]
Bacchos, all flushed with wine,
With clamor loud and long,
Wandering with Mænads wild,
Flashing with blazing torch,
Draw near against the God whom all the Gods disown.[15]

ŒDIPUS. Thou prayest, and for thy prayers, if thou wilt hear
My words, and treat the dire disease with skill,
Thou shalt find help and respite from thy pain, —
My words, which I, a stranger to report,
A stranger to the deed, will now declare:
For I myself should fail to track it far,
Finding no trace to guide my steps aright.
But now, as I have joined you since the deed,

Amphitrite, the bride of Neptune, or to the northern coasts of the Euxine, where Ares was worshipped as the special God of the Thracians.

[14] Bacchos, as born in Thebes, was known as the Cadmeian king, the Bœotian God, while Thebes took from him the epithet Bacchia.

[15] So, in the Iliad, Ares is, of all the Gods of Olympos, most hateful to Zeus as the cause of all strife and slaughter.

A citizen with citizens, I speak
To all the sons of Cadmos. Lives there one
Who knows of Laios, son of Labdacos,
The hand that slew him; him I bid to tell
His tale to me; and should it chance he shrinks
From raking up the charge against himself,
Still let him speak; no heavier doom is his
Than to depart uninjured from the land;
Or, if there be that knows an alien arm
As guilty, let him hold his peace no more;
I will secure his gain and thanks beside.
But if ye hold your peace, if one through fear,
Or for himself, or friend, shall hide this thing,
What then I purpose let him hear from me.
That man I banish, whosoe'er he be,
From out this land whose power and throne are mine;
And none may give him shelter, none speak to him,
Nor join with him in prayers and sacrifice,
Nor give him share in holy lustral stream;
But all shall thrust him from their homes, declared
Our curse and our pollution, as but now
The Pythian God's prophetic word has shown:
With acts like this, I stand before you here,
A helper to the God and to the dead.
All this I charge you do, for mine own sake,
And for the God's, and for this land that pines,
Barren and god-deserted. Wrong 'twould be
E'en if no voice from heaven had urged us on,
That ye should leave the stain of guilt uncleansed,
Your noblest chief, your king himself, being slain.
Yea, rather, seek and find. And since I reign,
Wielding the might his hand did wield before,
Filling his couch, and calling his wife mine,
Yea, and our offspring too, but for the fate
That fell on his, had grown in brotherhood;
But now an evil chance on his head swooped;
And therefore will I strive my best for him,

As for my father, and will go all lengths
To seek and find the murderer, him who slew
The son of Labdacos, and Polydore,
And earlier Cadmos, and Agenor old; [16]
And for all those who hearken not, I pray
The Gods to give them neither fruit of earth,
Nor seed of woman, but consume their lives
With this dire plague, or evil worse than this.
And for the man who did the guilty deed,
Whether alone he lurks, or leagued with more,
I pray that he may waste his life away,
For vile deeds, vilely dying; and for me,
If in my house, I knowing it, he dwells,
May every curse I spake on my head fall.
And you, the rest, the men from Cadmos sprung,
To whom these words approve themselves as good,
May Righteousness befriend you, and the Gods,
In full accord, dwell with you evermore.

CHORUS. Since thou hast bound me by a curse, O king,
I will speak thus. I neither slew the man,
Nor know who slew. To say who did the deed
Is quest for Him who sent us on the search.

ŒDIPUS. Right well thou speak'st, man's best strength must fail
To force the Gods to do the things they will not.

CHORUS. Fain would I speak the thoughts that second stand.

ŒDIPUS. Though there be third, shrink not from speaking out.

CHORUS. One man I know, a prince, whose insight deep
Sees clear as princely Phœbos, and from him,
Teiresias, one might learn, O king, the truth.

ŒDIPUS. That too is done. No loiterer I in this,
For I, on Creon's hint, two couriers sent
To summon him, and wonder that he comes not.

[16] Œdipus, as if identifying himself already with the kingly house, goes through the whole genealogy up to the remote ancestor.

CHORUS. Old rumors are there also, dark and dumb.
ŒDIPUS. And what are they? I weigh the slightest word.
CHORUS. 'Twas said he died by some chance traveler's hand.
ŒDIPUS. I, too, heard that. But none the eye-witness sees.
CHORUS. If yet his soul be capable of awe,
Hearing thy curses, he will shrink from them.
ŒDIPUS. Words fright not him, who doing, knows no fear.
CHORUS. Well, here is one who'll put him to the proof.
For lo! they bring the seer inspired of God,
With whom alone of all men, truth abides.

[*Enter* TEIRESIAS, *blind and guided by a boy.*]

ŒDIPUS. Teiresias! thou whose mind embraceth all,
Told or untold, of heaven or paths of earth;
Thou knowest, although thou see'st not, what a pest
Dwells on us, and we find in thee, O prince,
Our one deliverer, yea, our only help.
For Phœbos (if the couriers told thee not)
Sent back this word to us, who sent to ask,
That this one way was open to escape
From this fell plague,—if those who Laios slew,
We in our turn discovering should slay,
Or drive them forth as exiles from the land.
Thou, therefore, grudge not either sign from birds,
Or any other path of prophecy;
But save the city, save thyself, save me;
Save from the curse the dead has left behind;
On thee we hang. To use our means, our power,
In doing good, is noblest service owned.
TEIRESIAS. Ah me! ah me! how dread is wisdom's gift,
When no good issue waiteth on the wise!
I knew it all too well, and then forgot,
Or else I had not on this journey come.
ŒDIPUS. What means this? How despondingly thou com'st!

TEIRESIAS. Let me go home! for thus thy lot shalt thou,
And I mine own, bear easiest, if thou yield.

ŒDIPUS. No loyal words thou speak'st, nor true to Thebes
Who reared thee, holding back this oracle.

TEIRESIAS. I see thy lips speak words that profit not:
And lest I too a like fault should commit . . .

ŒDIPUS. Now, by the Gods, unless thy reason fails,
Refuse us not, who all implore thy help.

TEIRESIAS. Ah! Reason fails you all, but ne'er will I
Say what thou bidd'st, lest I thy troubles show.

ŒDIPUS. What mean'st thou, then? Thou know'st and wilt not tell,
But will betray us, and the state destroy?

TEIRESIAS. I will not pain myself nor thee. Why, then,
All vainly question? Thou shalt never know.

ŒDIPUS. Oh, basest of the base! (for thou would'st stir
A heart of stone;) and wilt thou never tell,
But still abide relentless and unmoved?

TEIRESIAS. My mood thou blamest, but thou dost not know
What dwelleth with thee while thou chidest me.

ŒDIPUS. And who would not feel anger, hearing words
Like those with which thou dost the state insult?

TEIRESIAS. Well! come they will, though I should hold my peace.

ŒDIPUS. If come they must, thy duty is to speak.

TEIRESIAS. I speak no more. So, if thou wilt, rage on,
With every mood of wrath most desperate.

ŒDIPUS. Yes; I will not refrain, so fierce my wrath,
From speaking all my thought. I think that thou
Did'st plot the deed, and do it, though the blow
Thy hands, it may be, dealt not. Had'st thou seen,
I would have said it was thy deed alone.

TEIRESIAS. And has it come to this? I charge thee, hold
To thy late edict, and from this day forth
Speak not to me, nor yet to these, for thou,
Thou art the accursèd plague-spot of the land.

ŒDIPUS. Art thou so shameless as to vent such words,
And dost thou think to 'scape scot-free for this?

TEIRESIAS. I have escaped. The strength of truth is mine.

ŒDIPUS. Who prompted thee? This comes not from thine art.

TEIRESIAS. 'Twas thou. Thou mad'st me speak against my will.

ŒDIPUS. What say'st thou? Speak again, that I may know.

TEIRESIAS. Did'st thou not know before? Or dost thou try me?

ŒDIPUS. I could not say I knew it. Speak again.

TEIRESIAS. I say thou art the murderer whom thou seek'st.

ŒDIPUS. Thou shalt not twice revile, and go unharmed.

TEIRESIAS. And shall I tell thee more to stir thy rage?

ŒDIPUS. Say what thou pleasest. 'Twill be said in vain.

TEIRESIAS. I say that thou, in vilest intercourse
With those that dearest are, dost blindly live,
Nor see'st the depth of evil thou hast reached.

ŒDIPUS. And dost thou think to say these things unscathed?

TEIRESIAS. I doubt it not, if truth retain her might.

ŒDIPUS. That might is not for thee; thou can'st not claim it,
Blind in thine ears, thy reason, and thine eyes.

TEIRESIAS. How wretched thou, thus hurling this reproach!
Such, all too soon, will all men hurl at thee.

ŒDIPUS. In one long night thou liv'st, and can'st not hurt,
Or me, or any man who sees the light.

TEIRESIAS. 'Tis not thy doom to owe thy fall to me;
Apollo is enough, be His the task.

ŒDIPUS. Are these devices Creon's, or thine own?

TEIRESIAS. It is not Creon harms thee, but thyself.

ŒDIPUS. O wealth, and sovereignty, and noblest skill
Surpassing skill in life so envy-fraught,
How great the ill-will dogging all your steps!
If for the sake of kingship, which the state
Hath given, unasked for, freely in mine hands,

Creon the faithful, found my friend throughout,
Now seeks with masked attack to drive me forth,
And hires this wizard, plotter of foul schemes,
A vagrant mountebank, whose sight is clear
For pay alone, but in his art stone-blind.
Is it not so? When wast thou true seer found?
Why, when the monster with her song was here,
Spak'st thou no word our countrymen to help?
And yet the riddle lay above the ken
Of common men, and called for prophet's skill.
And this thou show'dst thou had'st not, nor by bird,
Nor any God made known; but then I came,
I, Œdipus, who nothing know, and slew her,
With mine own counsel winning, all untaught
By flight of birds. And now thou would'st expel me,
And think'st to take thy stand by Creon's throne.
But, as I think, both thou and he that plans
With thee, will hunt this mischief to your cost;
And but that I must think of thee as old,
Thou had'st learnt wisdom, suffering what thou plann'st.

CHORUS. Far as we dare to guess, we think his words,
And thine, O Œdipus, in wrath are said.
Not such as these we need, but this to see,
How best to solve the God's great oracles.

TEIRESIAS. King though thou be, I claim an equal right
To make reply. That power, at least, is mine:
For I am not thy slave, but Loxias';[17]
Nor shall I stand on Creon's patronage:
And this I say, since thou my blindness mock'st,
That thou, though seeing, failest to perceive
Thy evil plight, nor where thou liv'st, nor yet
With whom thou dwellest. Know'st thou even this,
Whence thou art sprung? All ignorant thou sinn'st
Against thine own, beneath, and on the earth:
And soon a two-edged Curse from sire and mother,

[17] The special name of Apollo as the *prophetes* of Zeus, and therefore the guardian of all seers and prophets.

With foot of fear, shall chase thee forth from us,
Now seeing all things clear, then all things dark.
And will not then each creek repeat thy wail,
Each valley of Kithæron echoing ring,
When thou discern'st the marriage, fatal port,
To which thy prosp'rous voyage brought thy bark?
And other ills, in countless multitude,
Thou see'st not yet, shall make thy lot as one
With sire's and child's. Vent forth thy wrath then loud,
On Creon, and my speech. There lives not man
Whose life shall waste more wretchedly than thine.

ŒDIPUS. Can this be longer borne! Away with thee!
A curse light on thee! Wilt thou not depart?
Wilt thou not turn and from this house go back?

TEIRESIAS. I had not come, had'st thou not called me here.

ŒDIPUS. I knew not thou would'st speak so foolishly;
Else I had hardly fetched thee to my house.

TEIRESIAS. We then, so seems it thee, are fools from birth,
But, unto those who gave thee birth, seem wise.

[*Turns to go.*]

ŒDIPUS. [*Starting forward.*] What? Stay thy foot. What mortal gave me birth?

TEIRESIAS. This day shall give thy birth, and work thy doom.

ŒDIPUS. What riddles dark and dim thou lov'st to speak.

TEIRESIAS. Yes. But thy skill excels in solving such.

ŒDIPUS. Scoff thou at that in which thou'lt find me strong.

TEIRESIAS. And yet this same success has worked thy fall.

ŒDIPUS. I little care, if I have saved the state.

TEIRESIAS. Well, then, I go. Do thou, boy, lead me on!

ŒDIPUS. Let him lead on. Most hateful art thou near;
Thou can'st not pain me more when thou art gone.

TEIRESIAS. I go then, having said the things I came
To say. No fear of thee compels me. Thine
Is not the power to hurt me. And I say,
This man whom thou dost seek with hue-and-cry,
As murderer of Laios, he is here,

In show an alien sojourner, but in truth
A homeborn Theban. No delight to him
Will that discovery bring. Blind, having seen,
Poor, having rolled in wealth,—he, with a staff
Feeling his way, to a strange land shall go!
And to his sons shall he be seen at once
Father and brother, and of her who bore him
Husband and son, sharing his father's bed,
His father's murd'rer. Go thou then within,
And brood o'er this, and, if thou find'st me fail,
Say that my skill in prophecy is gone.

[*Exeunt* Œdipus *and* Teiresias.]

Strophe I

Chorus. Who was it that the rock oracular
Of Delphi spake of, working
With bloody hands of all dread deeds most dread?
Time is it now for him,
Swifter than fastest steed to bend his flight;
For, in full armor clad,
Upon him darts, with fire
And lightning flash, the radiant Son of Zeus,
And with Him come in train
The dread and awful Powers,
The Destinies that fail not of their aim.

Antistrophe I

For from Parnassos' heights, enwreathed with snow.
Gleaming, but now there shone
The oracle that bade us, one and all,
Track the unnamed, unknown;
For, lo! he wanders through the forest wild,
In caves and over rocks,
As strays the mountain bull,
In dreary loneliness with dreary tread,
Seeking in vain to shun

Dread words from central shrine;[18]
Yet they around him hover, full of life.

STROPHE II

Fearfully, fearfully the augur moves me.
Nor answering, aye nor no!
And what to say I know not, but float on,
And hover still in hopes,
And fail to scan things present or to come.
For not of old, nor now,
Learnt I what cause of strife at variance set
The old Labdakid race
With him, the child and heir of Polybos,
Nor can I test the tale,
And take my stand against the well-earned fame,
Of Œdipus, my lord,
As champion of the old Labdakid race,
For deaths obscure and dark!

ANTISTROPHE II

For Zeus and King Apollo, they are wise,
And know the hearts of men:
But that a seer excelleth me in skill,
This is no judgment true;
And one man may another's wisdom pass,
By wisdom higher still.
I, for my part, before the word is plain,
Will ne'er assent in blame.
Full clear, the wingèd Maiden-monster came
Against him, and he proved,
By sharpest test, that he was wise indeed,
By all the land beloved,
And never, from my heart at least, shall come
Words that accuse of guilt.

[*Enter* CREON.]

[18] Delphi, thought of by the Greeks, as Jerusalem was in the middle ages, as the center of the whole earth.

CREON. I come, ye citizens, as having learnt
Our sovereign, Œpidus, accuses me
Of dreadful things I cannot bear to hear.
For if, in these calamities of ours,
He thinks he suffers wrongly at my hands,
In word or deed, aught tending to his hurt,
I set no value on a life prolonged,
While this reproach hangs on me; for its harm
Affects not slightly, but is direst shame,
If through the town my name as villain rings,
By thee and by my friends a villain called.

CHORUS. But this reproach, it may be, came from wrath
All hasty, rather than from calm, clear mind.

CREON. And who informed him that the seer, seduced
By my devices, spoke his lying words?

CHORUS. The words were said, but with what mind I know not.

CREON. And was it with calm eyes and judgment calm,
This charge was brought against my name and fame?

CHORUS. I cannot say. To what our rulers do
I close my eyes. But here he comes himself.

[*Enter* ŒDIPUS.]

ŒDIPUS. Ho, there! is't thou? And does thy boldness soar
So shameless as to come beneath my roof,
When thou, 'tis clear, dost plot against my life,
And seek'st to rob me of my sovereignty?
Is it, by all the gods, that thou hast seen
Or cowardice or folly in my soul,
That thou hast laid thy plans? Or thoughtest thou
That I should neither see thy sinuous wiles,
Nor, knowing, ward them off? This scheme of thine,
Is it not wild, backed nor by force nor friends,
To seek the power which force and wealth must grasp?

CREON. Dost know what thou wilt do? For words of thine
Hear like words back, and as thou hearest, judge.

ŒDIPUS. Cunning of speech art thou. But I am slow
Of thee to learn, whom I have found my foe.

CREON. Of this, then, first, hear what I have to speak. . . .

ŒDIPUS. But this, then, say not, that thou art not vile.

CREON. If that thou thinkest self-willed pride avails,
Apart from judgment, know thou art not wise.

ŒDIPUS. If that thou think'st, thy kinsman injuring,
To do it unchastised, thou art not wise.

CREON. In this, I grant, thou speakest right; but tell,
What form of injury hast thou to endure?

ŒDIPUS. Did'st thou, or did'st thou not, thy counsel give,
Some one to send to fetch this reverend seer?

CREON. And even now by that advice I hold!

ŒDIPUS. How long a time has passed since Laios chanced . . . [*Pauses.*]

CREON. Chanced to do what? I understand not yet.

ŒDIPUS. Since he was smitten with the deadly blow?

CREON. The years would measure out a long, long tale.

ŒDIPUS. And was this seer then practicing his art?

CREON. Full wise as now, and equal in repute.

ŒDIPUS. Did he at that time say a word of me?

CREON. Not one, while I, at any rate, was by.

ŒDIPUS. What? Held ye not your quest upon the dead?

CREON. Of course we held it, but we nothing heard.

ŒDIPUS. How was it he, this wise one, spoke not then?

CREON. I know not, and, not knowing, hold my peace.

ŒDIPUS. Thy deed thou know'st, and with clear mind could'st speak!

CREON. What is't! I'll not deny it, if I know.

ŒDIPUS. Were he not leagued with thee he ne'er had talked
Of felon deed by me on Laios done.

CREON. If he says this, thou know'st it. I of thee
Desire to learn, as thou hast learnt of me.

ŒDIPUS. Learn then; on me no guilt of blood shall rest.

CREON. Well, then,—my sister? dost thou own her wife?

ŒDIPUS. I cannot meet this question with denial.

CREON. Rul'st thou this land in equal right with her?

ŒDIPUS. Her every wish she doth from me receive.
CREON. And am not I co-equal with you twain?
ŒDIPUS. Yes; and just here thou show'st thyself false friend.
CREON. Not so, if thou would'st reason with thyself,
As I will reason. First reflect on this;
Supposest thou that one would rather choose
To reign with fears than sleep untroubled sleep,
His power being equal? I, for one, prize less
The name of king than deeds of kingly power;
And so would all who learn in wisdom's school.
Now without fear I have what I desire,
At thy hand given. Did I rule, myself,
I might do much unwillingly. Why then
Should sovereignty exert a softer charm,
Than power and might unchequered by a care?
I am not yet so cheated by myself,
As to desire aught else but honest gain.
Now all men hail me, every one salutes,
Now they who seek thy favor court my smiles,
For on this hinge does all their fortune turn.
Why then should I leave this to hunt for that?
My mind, retaining reason, ne'er could act
The villain's part. I was not born to love
Such thoughts, nor join another in the act;
And as a proof of this, go thou thyself,
And ask at Pytho whether I brought back,
In very deed, the oracles I heard.
And if thou find me plotting with the seer,
In common concert, not by one decree,
But two, thine own and mine, put me to death.
But charge me not with crime on shadowy proof;
For neither is it just, in random thought,
The bad to count as good, nor good as bad;
For to thrust out a friend of noble heart,
Is like the parting with the life we love.
And this in time thou'lt know, for time alone

Makes manifest the righteous. Of the vile
Thou may'st detect the vileness in a day.

CHORUS. To one who fears to fall, his words seem good;
O king, swift counsels are not always safe.

ŒDIPUS. But when a man is swift in wily schemes,
Swift must I be to baffle plot with plot;
And if I stand and wait, he wins the day,
And all my state to rack and ruin goes.

CREON. What seek'st thou, then? to drive me from the land?

ŒDIPUS. Not so. I seek thy death, not banishment.

CREON. When thou show'st first what grudge I bear to thee.

ŒDIPUS. And say'st thou this defying, yielding not?

CREON. I see your mind is gone.

ŒDIPUS. My right I mind.

CREON. Mine has an equal claim.

ŒDIPUS. Nay, thou art vile.

CREON. And if thy mind is darkened . . . .?

ŒDIPUS. Still obey!

CREON. Nay, not a tyrant king.

ŒDIPUS. O country mine!

CREON. That country, too, is mine, not thine alone.

CHORUS. Cease, O my princes! In good time I see
Jocasta coming hither from the house;
And it were well with her to hush this brawl.

[*Enter* JOCASTA.]

JOCASTA. Why, O ye wretched ones, this strife of tongues
Raise ye in your unwisdom, nor are shamed,
Our country suffering, private griefs to stir?
Come thou within; and thou, O Creon, go;
Bring not a trifling sore to mischief great!

CREON. My sister! Œdipus thy husband claims
The right to do me one of two great wrongs,
To thrust me from my fatherland, or slay me.

ŒDIPUS. 'Tis even so, for I have found him, wife,
Against my life his evil wiles devising.

CREON. May I ne'er prosper, but accursèd die,
If I have done the things he says I did!
JOCASTA. Oh, by the Gods, believe him, Œdipus!
Respect his oath, which calls the Gods to hear;
And reverence me, and these who stand by thee.
CHORUS. Hearken, my king! Be calmer, I implore!
ŒDIPUS. What wilt thou that I yield?
CHORUS. Oh, have respect
To one not weak before, who now is strong
In this his oath.
ŒDIPUS. And know'st thou what thou ask'st?
CHORUS. I know right well.
ŒDIPUS. Say on, then, what thou wilt.
CHORUS. Hurl not to shame, on grounds of mere mistrust,
The friend on whom no taint of evil hangs.
ŒDIPUS. Know then that, seeking this, thou seek'st, in truth,
To work my death, or else my banishment.
CHORUS. Nay, by the Sun-God, Helios, chief of Gods![19]
May I, too, die, of God and man accursed,
If I wish aught like this! But on my soul,
Our wasting land dwells heavily; ills on ills
Still coming, new upon the heels of old.
ŒDIPUS. Let him depart then, even though I die,
Or from my country be thrust forth in shame:
Thy face, not his, I view with pitying eye;
For him, where'er he be, is nought but hate.
CREON. Thou'rt loth to yield, 'twould seem, and wilt be vexed
When this thy wrath is over: moods like thine
Are fitly to themselves most hard to bear.
ŒDIPUS. Wilt thou not go, and leave me?
CREON. I will go,
By thee misjudged, but known as just by these. [*Exit.*]
CHORUS. Why, lady, art thou slow to lead him in?

[19] Helios, specially invoked as the giver of light, discerning and making manifest all hidden things.

JOCASTA. I fain would learn how this sad chance arose.
CHORUS. Blind haste of speech there was, and wrong will sting.
JOCASTA. From both of them?
CHORUS. Yea, both.
JOCASTA. And what said each?
CHORUS. Enough for me, enough, our land laid low,
It seems, to leave the quarrel where it stopped.
ŒDIPUS. See'st thou, thou good in counsel, what thou dost,
Slighting my cause, and toning down thy zeal?
CHORUS. My chief, not once alone I spoke,
Unwise, unapt for wisdom should I seem,
Were I to turn from thee aside,
Who, when my country rocked in storm,
Did'st right her course. Ah! if thou can'st,
Steer her well onward now.
JOCASTA. Tell me, my king, what cause of fell debate
Has bred this discord, and provoked thy soul.
ŒDIPUS. Thee will I tell, for thee I honor more
Than these. 'Twas Creon and his plots against me.
JOCASTA. Say then, if clearly thou can'st tell the strife.
ŒDIPUS. He says that I am Laios' murderer.
JOCASTA. Of his own knowledge, or by some one taught?
ŒDIPUS. A scoundrel seer suborning. For himself,
He takes good care to free his lips from blame.
JOCASTA. Leave now thyself, and all thy thoughts of this,
And list to me, and learn how little skill
In art prophetic mortal man may claim;
And of this truth, I'll give thee one short proof.
There came to Laios once an oracle,
(I say not that it came from Phœbos' self,
But from his servants,) that his fate was fixed
By his son's hand to fall—his own and mine;
And him, so rumor runs, a robber band
Of aliens slay, where meet the three great roads.
Nor did three days succeed the infant's birth,
Before, by other hands, he cast him forth,

Piercing his ankles, on a lonely hill.
Here, then, Apollo failed to make the boy
His father's murderer; nor by his son's hands,
Doom that he dreaded, did our Laios die;
Such things divining oracles proclaimed;
Therefore regard them not. Whate'er the God
Desires to search he will himself declare.

ŒDIPUS. [*Trembling.*] Ah, as but now I heard thee speak, my queen,
Strange whirl of soul, and rush of thoughts o'ercome me.

JOCASTA. What vexing care bespeaks this sudden change?

ŒDIPUS. I thought I heard thee say that Laios fell,
Smitten to death where meet the three great roads.

JOCASTA. So was it said, and still the rumors hold.

ŒDIPUS. Where was the spot in which this matter passed?

JOCASTA. They call the country Phocis, and the roads [20]
From Delphi and from Daulia there converge.

ŒDIPUS. And what the interval of time since then?

JOCASTA. But just before thou camest to possess
And rule this land the tidings reached our city.

ŒDIPUS. Great Zeus! what fate hast thou decreed for me?

JOCASTA. What thought is this, my Œdipus, of thine?

ŒDIPUS. Ask me not yet, but Laios, . . . tell of him,
His build, his features, and his years of life.

JOCASTA. Tall was he, and the white hairs snowed his head,
And in his form not much unlike to thee.

ŒDIPUS. Woe, woe is me! so seems it I have plunged
All blindly into curses terrible.

JOCASTA. What sayest thou? I fear to look at thee.

ŒDIPUS. I tremble lest the seer has seen indeed:
But thou can'st clear it, answering yet once more.

JOCASTA. And I too fear, yet what thou ask'st I'll tell.

ŒDIPUS. Went he in humble guise, or with a troop

[20] The meeting place of the three roads is now the site of a decayed Turkish village, the *Stavrodrom* of Mparpanas.

In Æschylos (Fragm. 160), the scene of the murder was laid at Potniæ, on the road between Thebes and Platæa. As the name indicates, the Erinnyes were worshipped there.

Of spearmen, as becomes a man that rules?
JOCASTA. Five were they altogether, and of them
One was a herald, and one chariot bore him.
ŒDIPUS. Woe! woe! 'tis all too clear. And who was he
That told these tidings to thee, O my queen?
JOCASTA. A servant who alone escaped with life.
ŒDIPUS. And does he chance to dwell among us now?
JOCASTA. Not so; for from the time when he returned,
And found thee bearing sway, and Laios dead,
He, at my hand, a suppliant, implored
This boon, to send him to the distant fields
To feed his flocks, as far as possible
From this our city. And I sent him forth;
For though a slave, he might have claimed yet more.
ŒDIPUS. Ah! could we fetch him quickly back again!
JOCASTA. That may well be. But why dost thou wish this?
ŒDIPUS. I fear, O queen, that words best left unsaid
Have passed these lips, and therefore wish to see him.
JOCASTA. Well, he shall come. But some small claim have I,
O king, to learn what touches thee with woe.
ŒDIPUS. Thou shalt not fail to learn it, now that I
Have gone so far in bodings. Whom should I
More than to thee tell all the passing chance?
I had a father, Polybos of Corinth,
And Merope of Doris was my mother,
And I was held in honor by the rest
Who dwelt there, till this accident befell,
Worthy of wonder, of the heat unworthy
It roused within me. Thus it chanced: A man
At supper, in his cups, with wine o'ertaken,
Reviles me as a spurious changeling boy;
And I, sore vexèd, hardly for that day
Restrained myself. And when the morrow came
I went and charged my father and my mother
With what I thus had heard. They heaped reproach
On him who stirred the matter, and I soothed
My soul with what they told me; yet it teased,

Still vexing more and more, and so I went,
Unknown to them, to Pytho, and the god
Sent me forth shamed, unanswered in my quest;
And other things he spake, dread, dire, and dark,
That I should join in wedlock with my mother,
Beget a brood that men should loathe to look at,
Be murderer of the father that begot me.
And, hearing this, I straight from Corinth fled,
The stars henceforth the land-marks of my way,
And fled where never more mine eyes might see
The shame of those dire oracles fulfilled;
And as I went I reached the spot where he,
This king, thou tell'st me, met the fatal blow.
And now, O lady, I will tell the truth.
Wending my steps that way where three roads meet,
There met me first a herald, and a man
Like him thou told'st of, riding on his car,
Drawn by young colts. With rough and hasty force
They drove me from the road,—the driver first,
And that old man himself; and then in rage
I strike the driver, who had turned me back,
And when the old man sees it, watching me
As by the chariot side I passed, he struck
My forehead with a double-pointed goad.
But we were more than quits, for in a trice
With this right hand I struck him with my staff,
And he rolls backward from his chariot's seat.
And then I slay them all. And if it chance
That Laios and this stranger are akin,
What man more wretched than this man who speaks?
What man more harassed by the vexing gods?
He whom none now, or alien, or of Thebes,
May welcome to their house, or speak to him,
But thrust him forth an exile. And 'twas I,
None other, who against myself proclaimed
These curses. And the bed of him that died
I with my hands, by which he fell, defile.

Am I not born to evil, all unclean?
If I must flee, yet still in flight my doom
Is never more to see the friends I love,
Nor tread my country's soil; or else to bear
The guilt of incest, and my father slay,
Yea, Polybos, who begat and brought me up.
Would not a man say right who said that here
Some cruel God was pressing hard on me?
Not that, not that, at least, thou Presence, pure
And awful, of the Gods; may I ne'er look
On such a day as that, but far away
Depart unseen from all the haunts of men,
Before such great pollution comes on me.

CHORUS. We, too, O king, are grieved, yet hope thou on,
Till thou hast asked the man who then was by.

ŒDIPUS. And this indeed is all the hope I have,
Waiting until that shepherd-slave appear.

JOCASTA. And when he comes, what ground for hope is there?

ŒDIPUS. I'll tell thee. Should he now repeat the tale
Thou told'st me, I, at least, stand free from guilt.

JOCASTA. What special word was that thou heard'st from me?

ŒDIPUS. Thou said'st he told that robbers slew his lord,
And should he give their number as the same
Now as before, it was not I who slew him,
For one man could not be the same as many,
But if he speak of one man, all alone,
Then, all too plain, the deed cleaves fast to me.

JOCASTA. But know, the thing was said, and clearly said,
And now he cannot from his word draw back.
Not I alone, but the whole city, heard it;
And should he now retract his former tale,
Not then, my husband, will he rightly show
The death of Laios, who, as Loxias told,
By my son's hands should die; and yet, poor boy,
He killed him not, but perished long ago,

So I, at least, for all their oracles,
Will never more cast glance or here, or there.
ŒDIPUS. Thou reasonest well. Yet send a messenger
To fetch that peasant. Be not slack in this.
JOCASTA. I will make haste. But let us now go in;
I would do nothing that displeaseth thee. [*Exeunt.*]

STROPHE I

CHORUS. O that 'twere mine to keep
An awful purity,
In words and deeds whose laws on high are set
Through heaven's clear æther spread,
Whose birth Olympos boasts,
Their one, their only sire,
Whom man's frail flesh begat not,
Nor in forgetfulness
Shall lull to sleep of death;
In them our God is great,
In them He grows not old for evermore.

ANTISTROPHE I

But pride begets the mood
Of wanton, tyrant power;
Pride filled with many thoughts, yet filled in vain,
Untimely, ill-advised,
Scaling the topmost height,
Falls to the abyss of woe,
Where step that profiteth
It seeks in vain to take.
I ask our God to stay
The labours never more
That work our country's good;
I will not cease to call on God for aid.

STROPHE II

But if there be who walketh haughtily,
In action or in speech,

Whom Righteousness herself has ceased to awe,
Who shrines of Gods reveres not,
An evil fate be his,
(Fit meed for all his evil boastfulness;)
Unless he gain his gains more righteously,
And draweth back from deeds of sacrilege,
Nor lays rash hand upon the holy things,
By man inviolable:
Who now, if such things be,
Will boast that he can guard
His soul from darts of wrath?
If deeds like these are held in high repute,
What profit is't for me
To raise my choral strain?

ANTISTROPHE II

No-longer will I go in pilgrim's guise,
To yon all holy place,
Earth's central shrine, nor Abæ's temple old,
Nor to Olympia's fane,[21]
Unless these things shall stand
In sight of all men, tokens clear from God.
But, O thou sovereign Ruler! if that name,
O Zeus, belongs to thee, who reign'st o'er all,
Let not this trespass hide itself from thee,
Or thine undying sway;
For now they set at nought
The worn-out oracles,
That Laios heard of old,
And king Apollo's wonted worship flags,
And all to wreck is gone
The homage due to God.

[*Enter* JOCASTA, *followed by Attendants.*]

[21] The central shrine is Delphi, where a white oval stone was supposed to be the very center, or *omphalos* of the earth. At Abæ, in Phocis, was an oracle of Apollo, believed to be older than that of Delphi. In Olympia, the priests of Zeus divined from the clearness or dimness of the fire upon the altar.

JOCASTA. Princes of this our land, across my soul
There comes the thought to go from shrine to shrine
Of all the Gods, these garlands in my hand,
And waving incense; for our Œdipus
Vexes his soul too wildly with all woes,
And speaks not as a man should speak who scans
New issues by experience of the old,
But hangs on every breath that tells of fear.
And since I find that my advice avails not,
To thee, Lykeian King, Apollo, first
I come,—for thou art nearest,—suppliant
With these devotions, trusting thou wilt work
Some way of healing for us, free from guilt;
For now we shudder, all of us, seeing him,
The good ship's pilot, stricken down with fear.

[*Enter* MESSENGER.]

MESSENGER. May I inquire of you, O strangers, where
To find the house of Œdipus the king,
And, above all, where he is, if ye know?

CHORUS. This is the house, and he, good sir, within,
And here stands she, the mother of his children.

MESSENGER. Good fortune be with her and all her kin,
Being, as she is, his true and honoured wife.

JOCASTA. Like fortune be with thee, my friend. Thy speech,
So kind, deserves no less. But tell me why
Thou comest, what thou hast to ask or tell.

MESSENGER. Good news to thee, and to thy husband, lady.

JOCASTA. What is it, then? and who has sent thee here?

MESSENGER. I come from Corinth, and the news I'll tell
May give thee joy. How else? Yet thou may'st grieve.

JOCASTA. What is the news that has this twofold power?

MESSENGER. The citizens that on the Isthmus dwell
Will make him sovereign. So the rumour ran.

JOCASTA. What! Does old Polybos hold his own no more?

MESSENGER. Nay, nay. Death holds him in his sepulchre.

JOCASTA. What say'st thou? Polybos, thy king, is dead?

MESSENGER. If I speak false, I bid you take my life.

JOCASTA. Go, maiden, at thy topmost speed, and tell
Thy master this. Now, oracles of Gods,
Where are ye now? Long since my Œdipus
Fled, fearing lest his hand should slay the man;
And now he dies by fate, and not by him.

[*Enter* ŒDIPUS.]

ŒDIPUS. Mine own Jocasta, why, O dearest one,
Why hast thou sent to fetch me from the house?

JOCASTA. List this man's tale, and, when thou hearest, see
The plight of those the God's dread oracles.

ŒDIPUS. Who then is this, and what has he to tell?

JOCASTA. He comes from Corinth, and he brings thee word
That Polybos thy father lives no more.

ŒDIPUS. What say'st thou, friend? Tell me thy tale thyself.

MESSENGER. If I must needs report the story clear,
Know well that he has gone the way of death.

ŒDIPUS. Was it by plot, or chance of some disease?

MESSENGER. An old man's frame a little stroke lays low.

ŒDIPUS. By some disease, 'twould seem, he met his death?

MESSENGER. Yes, that, and partly worn by lingering age.

ŒDIPUS. Ha! ha! Why now, my queen, should we regard
The Pythian hearth oracular, or birds
In mid-air crying? [22] By their auguries,
I was to slay my father. And he dies,
And the grave hides him; and I find myself
Handling no sword; . . . unless for love of me
He pined away, and so I caused his death.
So Polybos is gone, and bears with him,
In Hades 'whelmed, those worthless oracles.

JOCASTA. Did I not tell thee this long time ago?

ŒDIPUS. Thou did'st, but I was led away by fears.

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[22] The "Pythian hearth," with special reference to the apparent failure of the Delphic oracle; "birds," to that of the auguries of Teiresias.

JOCASTA. Dismiss them, then, for ever from thy thoughts!
ŒDIPUS. And yet that "incest"; must I not fear that?
JOCASTA. Why should we fear, when chance rules everything,
And foresight of the future there is none;
'Tis best to live at random, as one can.
But thou, fear not that marriage with thy mother:
Many ere now have dreamt of things like this,
But who cares least about them bears life best.
ŒDIPUS. Right well thou speakest all things, save that she
Still lives that bore me, and I can but fear,
Seeing that she lives, although thou speakest well.
JOCASTA. And yet great light comes from thy father's grave.
ŒDIPUS. Great light I own; yet while she lives I fear.
MESSENGER. Who is this woman about whom ye fear?
ŒDIPUS. 'Tis Merope, old sir, who lived with Polybos.
MESSENGER. And what leads you to think of her with fear?
ŒDIPUS. A fearful oracle, my friend, from God.
MESSENGER. Can'st tell it? or must others ask in vain?
ŒDIPUS. Most readily: for Loxias said of old
That I should with my mother wed, and then
With mine own hands should spill my father's blood.
And therefore Corinth long ago I left,
And journeyed far, right prosperously I own;—
And yet 'tis sweet to see one's parents' face.
MESSENGER. And did this fear thy steps to exile lead?
ŒDIPUS. I did not wish to take my father's life.
MESSENGER. Why, then, O king, did I, with good-will come,
Not free thee from this fear that haunts thy soul?
ŒDIPUS. Yes, and for this thou shalt have worthy thanks.
MESSENGER. For this, indeed, I chiefly came to thee:
That I on thy return might prosper well.
ŒDIPUS. And yet I will not with a parent meet.
MESSENGER. 'Tis clear, my son, thou know'st not what thou dost.
ŒDIPUS. What is't? By all the Gods, old man, speak out.
MESSENGER. If 'tis for them thou fearest to return . . .

ŒDIPUS. I fear lest Phœbos prove himself too true.
MESSENGER. Is it lest thou should'st stain thy soul through them?
ŒDIPUS. This self-same fear, old man, for ever haunts me.
MESSENGER. And know'st thou not there is no cause for fear?
ŒDIPUS. Is there no cause if I was born their son?
MESSENGER. None is there. Polybos was nought to thee.
ŒDIPUS. What say'st thou? Did not Polybos beget me?
MESSENGER. No more than he thou speak'st to; just as much.
ŒDIPUS. How could a father's claim become as nought?
MESSENGER. Well, neither he begat thee nor did I.
ŒDIPUS. Why then did he acknowledge me as his?
MESSENGER. He at my hands received thee as a gift.
ŒDIPUS. And could he love another's child so much?
MESSENGER. Yes; for his former childlessness wrought on him.
ŒDIPUS. And gav'st thou me as foundling or as bought?
MESSENGER. I found thee in Kithæron's shrub-grown hollow.
ŒDIPUS. And for what cause did'st travel thitherwards?
MESSENGER. I had the charge to tend the mountain flocks.
ŒDIPUS. Wast thou a shepherd, then, and seeking hire?
MESSENGER. E'en so, my son, and so I saved thee then.
ŒDIPUS. What evil plight then did'st thou find me in?
MESSENGER. The sinews of thy feet would tell that tale.
ŒDIPUS. Ah, me! why speak'st thou of that ancient wrong?
MESSENGER. I freed thee when thy insteps both were pierced.
ŒDIPUS. A foul disgrace I had in swaddling-clothes.
MESSENGER. Thus from this chance there came the name thou bearest.
ŒDIPUS. [*Starting.*] Who gave the name, my father or my mother?
MESSENGER. I know not. He who gave thee better knows.

ŒDIPUS. Did'st thou then take me from another's hand,
Not finding me thyself?
MESSENGER. Not I, indeed;
Another shepherd made a gift of thee.
ŒDIPUS. Who was he? Know'st thou how to point him out?
MESSENGER. They called him one of those that Laios owned.
ŒDIPUS. Mean'st thou the former sovereign of this land?
MESSENGER. E'en so. He fed the flocks of him thou nam'st.
ŒDIPUS. And is he living still that I might see him?
MESSENGER. You, his own countrymen, should know that best.
ŒDIPUS. Is there of you who stand and listen here
One who has known the shepherd that he tells of,
Or seeing him upon the hills or here?
If so, declare it; 'tis full time to know.
CHORUS. I think that this is he whom from the fields
But now thou soughtest. But Jocasta here
Could tell thee this with surer word than I.
ŒDIPUS. Think'st thou, my queen, the man whom late we sent for
Is one with him of whom this stranger speaks?
JOCASTA. [*With forced calmness.*] Whom did he speak of? Care not thou for it,
Nor even wish to keep his words in mind.
ŒDIPUS. I cannot fail, once getting on the scent,
To track at last the secret of my birth.
JOCASTA. Ah, by the Gods, if that thou valuest life
Inquire no more. My misery is enough.
ŒDIPUS. Take heart; though I should prove thrice base-born slave,
Born of thrice base-born mother, thou art still
Free from all stain.
JOCASTA. Yet, I implore thee, pause!
Yield to my counsels, do not do this deed.
ŒDIPUS. I may not yield, nor fail to search it out.

JOCASTA. And yet best counsels give I, for thy good.
ŒDIPUS. What thou call'st best has long been grief to me.
JOCASTA. May'st thou ne'er know, ill-starred one, who thou art!
ŒDIPUS. Will some one bring that shepherd to me here?
Leave her to glory in her high descent.
JOCASTA. Woe! woe! ill-fated one! my last word this,
This only, and no more for evermore. [*Rushes out.*]
CHORUS. Why has thy queen, O Œdipus, gone forth
In her wild sorrow rushing? Much I fear
Lest from such silence evil deeds burst out.
ŒDIPUS. Burst out what will; I seek to know my birth,
Low though it be, and she perhaps is shamed
(For, like a woman, she is proud of heart)
At thoughts of my low birth; but I, who count
Myself the child of Fortune, fear no shame;
My mother she, and she has prospered me.
And so the months that span my life have made me
Both low and high; but whatsoe'er I be,
Such as I am I am, and needs must on
To fathom all the secret of my birth.

STROPHE

CHORUS. If the seer's gift be mine,
Or skill in counsel wise,
Thou, O Kithæron, by Olympos high,
When next our full moon comes,
Shalt fail not to resound
With cry that greets thee, fellow-citizen,
Mother and nurse of Œdipus;
And we will on thee weave our choral dance,
As bringing to our princes glad good news,
Hail, hail, O Phœbos, grant that what we do
May meet thy favouring smile.

ANTISTROPHE.

Who was it bore thee, child,[23]
Of Nymphs whose years are long,
Or drawing near the mighty Father, Pan,
Who wanders o'er the hills,
Or Loxias' paramour,
Who loves the high lawns of the pasturing flocks?
Or was it He who rules
Kyllene's height; or did the Bacchic god,
Whose dwelling is upon the mountain peaks,
Receive thee, gift of Heliconian nymphs,
With whom He loves to sport?

ŒDIPUS. If I must needs conjecture, who as yet
Ne'er met the man, I think I see the shepherd,
Whom this long while we sought for. In his age
He this man matches. And I see besides,
My servants bring him. Thou perchance can'st speak
From former knowledge yet more certainly.

CHORUS. I know him, king, be sure; for this man stood,
If any, known as Laios' herdsman true.

[*Enter* SHEPHERD.]

ŒDIPUS. Thee first I ask, Corinthian stranger, say,
Is this the man?

MESSENGER. The very man thou seek'st.

ŒDIPUS. Ho there! old man. Come hither, look on me,
And tell me all. Did Laios own thee once?

SHEPHERD. His slave I was, not bought, but reared at home.

ŒDIPUS. What was thy work, or what thy mode of life?

SHEPHERD. Near all my life I followed with the flock.

ŒDIPUS. And in what region did'st thou chiefly dwell?

[23] The Chorus, thinking only of the wonder of Œdipus's birth, plays with the conjecture that he is the offspring of the Gods, of Pan, the God of the hills, or Apollo, the prophet God, or Hermes, worshipped on Kyllene in Arcadia; or Bacchos, roaming on the highest peaks of Parnassos. The Heliconian nymphs are of course, the Muses.

SHEPHERD. Now 'twas Kithæron, now on neighbouring fields.

ŒDIPUS. Know'st thou this man? Did'st ever see him there?

SHEPHERD. What did he do? Of what man speakest thou?

ŒDIPUS. This man now present. Did ye ever meet?

SHEPHERD. I cannot say off-hand from memory.

MESSENGER. No wonder that, my lord. But I'll remind him
Right well of things forgotten. Well I know
He needs must know when on Kithæron's fields,
He with a double flock, and I with one,
I was his neighbour during three half years,
From springtide till Arcturos rose; and I
In winter to mine own fold drove my flocks,
And he to those of Laios. [*To* SHEPHERD.] Answer me,
Speak I, or speak I not, the thing that was?

SHEPHERD. Thou speak'st the truth, although long years have passed.

MESSENGER. Come, then, say on. Dost know thou gav'st me once
A boy, that I might rear him as my child?

SHEPHERD. What means this? Wherefore askest thou of that?

MESSENGER. Here stands he, fellow! that same tiny boy.

SHEPHERD. A curse befall thee! Wilt not hold thy tongue?

ŒDIPUS. Rebuke him not, old man; thy words need more
The language of rebuker than do his.

SHEPHERD. Say, good my lord, what fault do I commit?

ŒDIPUS. This, that thou tell'st not of the child he asks for.

SHEPHERD. Yes, for he nothing knows, and wastes his pains.

ŒDIPUS. For favour thou speak'st not, but shalt for pain. . . . [*Strikes him.*]

SHEPHERD. By all the Gods, hurt not an old man weak.

ŒDIPUS. Will no one bind his hands behind his back? [24]

[24] *Sc.*, Will no one scourge him at my command, and make him confess?

SHEPHERD. Oh wretched me! And what then wilt thou learn?

ŒDIPUS. Gav'st thou this man the boy of whom he asks?

SHEPHERD. I gave him. Would that I that day had died.

ŒDIPUS. Soon thou wilt come to that if thou speak'st wrong.

SHEPHERD. Nay, much more shall I perish if I speak.

ŒDIPUS. This fellow, as it seems, would tire us out.

SHEPHERD. Not so. I said long since I gave it him.

ŒDIPUS. Whence came it? Was the child thine own or not?

SHEPHERD. Mine own 'twas not, from some one else I had it.

ŒDIPUS. Which of our people, or from out what home?

SHEPHERD. Oh, by the Gods, my master, ask no more!

ŒDIPUS. Thou diest if I question this again.

SHEPHERD. Some one it was of Laios' household born.

ŒDIPUS. Was it a slave, or some one kin to him?

SHEPHERD. Ah me, I stand upon the very brink
Where most I dread to speak.

ŒDIPUS. And I to hear:
And yet I needs must hear it, come what may.

SHEPHERD. The boy was said to be his son; but she,
Thy queen within, could tell the whole truth best.

ŒDIPUS. What! was it she who gave it?

SHEPHERD. Yea, O king!

ŒDIPUS. And to what end?

SHEPHERD. To make away with it.

ŒDIPUS. And dared a mother . . . ?

SHEPHERD. Auguries dark she feared.

ŒDIPUS. What were they?

SHEPHERD. E'en that he his sire should kill.

ŒDIPUS. Why then did'st thou to this old man resign him?

SHEPHERD. I pitied him, O master, and I thought
That he would bear him to another land,
Whence he himself had come. But him he saved

For direst evil. For if thou be he
Whom this man speaks of, thou art evil-starred.

ŒDIPUS. Woe! woe! woe! woe! all cometh clear at last.
O light, may this my last glance be on thee,
Who now am seen owing my birth to those
To whom I ought not, and with whom I ought not
In wedlock living, whom I ought not slaying. [*Exit.*]

STROPHE I

CHORUS. Ah, race of mortal men,
How as a thing of nought
I count ye, though ye live;
For who is there of men
That more of blessing knows,
Than just a little while
To seem to prosper well,
And, having seemed, to fall?
With thee as pattern given,
Thy destiny, e'en thine,
Ill-fated Œdipus,
I count nought human blest.

ANTISTROPHE I

For he, with wondrous skill,
Taking his aim, did hit
Success, in all things blest;
And did, O Zeus! destroy
The Virgin with claws bent,
And sayings wild and dark;
And against many deaths
A tower and strong defence
Did for my country rise:
And so thou king art named,
With highest glory crowned,
Ruling in mighty Thebes.

STROPHE II

And now, who lives than thou more miserable?
Who equals thee in wild woes manifold,
In shifting turns of life?
Ah, noble one, our Œdipus!
For whom the same wide harbour
Sufficed for sire and son,
In marriage rites to enter:
Ah how, ah, wretched one,
How could thy father's bed
Receive thee, and so long,
Even till now, be dumb?

ANTISTROPHE III

Time, who sees all things, he hath found thee out,
Against thy will, and long ago condemned
The wedlock none may wed,
Begetter and begotten.
Ah, child of Laios! would
I ne'er had seen thy face!
I mourn with wailing lips,
Mourn sore exceedingly.
'Tis simplest truth to say,
By thee from death I rose,
By thee in death I sleep.

[*Enter* SECOND MESSENGER.]

SECOND MESSENGER. Ye chieftains, honoured most in this our land
What deeds ye now will hear of, what will see,
How great a wailing will ye raise, if still
Ye truly love the house of Labdacos!
For sure I think that neither Istros' stream
Nor Phasis' floods could purify this house,[25]
Such horrors does it hold. But soon 'twill show

[25] Istros as the great river of Europe, Phasis of Asia.

Evils self-chosen, not without free choice:
These self-sought sorrows ever pain men most.

CHORUS. The ills we knew before lacked nothing meet
For plaint and moaning. Now, what add'st thou more?

SECOND MESSENGER. Quickest for me to speak, and thee to learn;
Our sacred queen Jocasta,—she is dead.

CHORUS. Ah, crushed with many sorrows! How and why?

SECOND MESSENGER. Herself she slew. The worst of all that passed
I must omit, for none were there to see.
Yet, far as memory suffers me to speak,
That sorrow-stricken woman's end I'll tell;
For when to passion yielding, on she passed
Within the porch, straight to the couch she rushed,
Her bridal bed, with both hands tore her hair,
And as she entered, dashing through the doors,
Calls on her Laios, dead long years ago,
Remembering that embrace of long ago,
Which brought him death, and left to her who bore,
With his own son a hateful motherhood.
And o'er her bed she wailed, where she had borne
Spouse to her spouse, and children to her child;
And how she perished after this I know not;
For Œdipus struck in with woeful cry,
And we no longer looked upon her fate,
But gazed on him as to and fro he rushed.
For so he raves, and asks us for a sword,
Wherewith to smite the wife that wife was none,
The womb polluted with accursèd births,
Himself, his children,—so, as thus he raves,
Some spirit shows her to him, (none of us,
Who stood hard by had done so): with a shout
Most terrible, as some one led him on,
Through the two gates he leapt, and from the wards
He slid the hollow bolt, and rushes in;
And there we saw his wife had hung herself,

By twisted cords suspended. When her form
He saw, poor wretch! with one wild, fearful cry,
The twisted rope he loosens, and she fell,
Ill-starred one, on the ground. Then came a sight
Most fearful. Tearing from her robe the clasps,
All chased with gold, with which she decked herself,
He with them struck the pupils of his eyes,
With words like these—"Because they had not seen
What ills he suffered and what ills he did,
They in the dark should look, in time to come,
On those whom they ought never to have seen,
Nor know the dear ones whom he fain had known."
With such like wails, not once or twice alone,
Raising his eyes, he smote them, and the balls,
All bleeding, stained his cheek, nor poured they forth
Gore drops slow trickling, but the purple shower
Fell fast and full, a pelting storm of blood,
Such were the ills that sprang from both of them,
Not on one only, wife and husband both.
His ancient fortune, which he held of old,
Was truly fortune: but for this day's doom
Wailing and woe, and death and shame, all forms
That man can name of evil, none have failed.

CHORUS. What rest from suffering hath the poor wretch now?

SECOND MESSENGER. He calls to us to ope the bolts, and show
To all in Thebes his father's murderer,
His mother's . . . Foul and fearful were the words
He spoke; I dare not speak them. Then he said
That he would cast himself adrift, nor stay
At home accursèd, as himself had cursed.
Some stay he surely needs, or guiding hand,
For greater is the ill than he can bear,
And this he soon will show thee, for the bolts
Of the two gates are opening, and thou'lt see
A sight to touch e'en hatred's self with pity.

[*The doors of the Palace are thrown open, and* ŒDIPUS *is seen within.*]

CHORUS. Oh, fearful sight for men to look upon!
Most fearful of all woes
I hitherto have known! What madness strange
Has come on thee, thou wretched one?
What Power with one fell swoop,
Ills heaping upon ills,
Than greatest greater yet,
Has marked thee for its prey?
Woe! woe! thou doomed one, wishing much to ask,
And much to learn, and much to gaze into,
I cannot look on thee,
So horrible the sight!

ŒDIPUS. Ah, woe! ah, woe! ah, woe!
Woe for my misery!
Where am I wandering in my utter woe?
Where floats my voice in air?
Dread Power, with crushing might
Thou leaped'st on my head.

CHORUS. Yea, with dread doom nor sight nor speech may bear.

ŒDIPUS. O cloud of darkness, causing one to shrink,
That onward sweeps with dread ineffable,
Resistless, borne along by evil blast,
Woe, woe, and woe again!
How through me darts the throb these clasps have caused,
And memory of my ills.

CHORUS. And who can wonder that in such dire woes
Thou mournest doubly, bearing twofold ills?

ŒDIPUS. Ah, friend,
Thou only keepest by me, faithful found,
Nor dost the blind one slight.
Woe, woe,
For thou escap'st me not; I clearly know,
Though all is dark, at least that voice of thine.

CHORUS. O man of fearful deeds, how could'st thou bear
Thine eyes to outrage? What Power stirred thee to it?
ŒDIPUS. Apollo, oh, my friends, the God, Apollo,
Who worketh out all these, my bitter woes:
Yet no man's hand but mine has smitten them.
What need for me to see,
When nothing's left that's sweet to look upon?
CHORUS. Too truly dost thou speak the thing that is.
ŒDIPUS. Yea, what remains to see,
Or what to love, or hear,
With any touch of joy?
Lead me away, my friends, with utmost speed
Lead me away, the foul polluted one,
Of all men most accursed,
Most hateful to the Gods.
CHORUS. Ah, wretched one, alike in soul and doom.
I fain could wish that I had never known thee.
ŒDIPUS. Ill fate be his who from the fetters freed
The child upon the hills,
And rescued me from death,
And saved me,—thankless boon!
Ah! had I died but then,
Nor to my friends nor me had been such woe.
CHORUS. I, too, could fain wish that.
ŒDIPUS. Yes; then I had not been
My father's murderer:
Nor had men pointed to me as the man
Wedded with her who bore him.
But now all godless, born of impious stock,
In incest joined with her who gave me birth;—
Yea, if there be an evil worse than all,
It falls on Œdipus!
CHORUS. I may not say that thou art well-advised,
For better wert thou dead than living blind.
ŒDIPUS. Persuade me not, nor counsel give to show
That what I did was not the best to do.
I know not with what eyes, in Hades dark,

To look on mine own father or my mother,
When I against them both, alas! have done
Deeds for which strangling were too light a doom.
My children's face, forsooth, was sweet to see,
Their birth being what it was; nay, nay, not so
To these mine eyes, nor yet this town, nor tower,
Nor sacred shrines of Gods whence I, who stood
Most honoured one in Thebes, myself have banished,
Commanding all to thrust the godless forth,
Him whom the Gods do show accursed, the stock
Of Laios old. And could I dare to look,
Such dire pollution fixing on myself,
And meet these face to face? Not so, not so.
Yea, if I could but stop the stream of sound,
And dam mine ears against it, I would do it,
Sealing my carcase vile, that I might live
Both blind, and hearing nothing. Sweet 'twould be
To keep my soul beyond the reach of ills.
Why, O Kithæron, did'st thou shelter me,
Nor kill me out of hand? I had not shown,
In that case, all men whence I drew my birth.
O Polybos, and Corinth, and the home
Of old called mine, how strange a growth ye reared,
All fair outside, all rotten at the core;
For vile I stand, descended from the vile.
Ye threefold roads and thickets half concealed,
The copse, the narrow pass where three ways meet,
Which at my hands did drink my father's blood,
Remember ye, what deeds I did in you,
What, hither come, I did?—O marriage rites
That gave me birth, and, having borne me, gave
To me in turn an offspring, and ye showed
Fathers, and sons, and brothers, all in one,
Mothers, and wives, and daughters, hateful names,
All foulest deeds that men have ever done.
But, since, where deeds are evil, speech is wrong,
With utmost speed, by all the Gods, or slay me,

Or drive me forth, or hide me in the sea,
Where never more your eyes may look on me,
Come, scorn ye not to touch a wretch like me,
But hearken; fear ye not; no soul save me
Can bear the burden of my countless ills.
But ye, if ye have lost your sense of shame
For mortal men, yet reverence the light
Of him, our King, the Sun-God, source of life,
Nor sight so foul expose unveiled to view,
Which neither earth, nor shower from heaven, nor light,
Can see and welcome. But with utmost speed
Convey me in; for nearest kin alone
Can meetly see and hear their kindred's ills.[26]

CHORUS. The man for what thou need'st is come in time,
Creon, to counsel, and to act, for now
He in thy stead is left our state's one guide.[27]

ŒDIPUS. Ah, me! what language shall I hold to him,
What trust at his hands claim? In all the past
I showed myself to him most vile and base.

[*Enter* CREON.]

CREON. I have not come, O Œdipus, to scorn,
Nor to reproach thee for thy former crimes.

ŒDIPUS. Oh, by the Gods! since thou, beyond my hopes.
Dost come all noble unto me all base,
One favour grant. I seek thy good, not mine.

CREON. And what request seek'st thou so wistfully?

ŒDIPUS. Cast me with all thy speed from out this land,
Where nevermore a man may speak to me!

CREON. Be sure, I would have done so, but I wished
To learn what now the God will bid us do.

ŒDIPUS. The oracle was surely clear enough
That I the parricide, the pest, should die.

[26] I follow Schneidewin in transferring the last lines from Creon to Œdipus.

[27] The two sons of Œdipus, Polyneikes and Eteocles, the Chorus thinks of as too young to reign.

CREON. So ran the words. But in our present need
'Tis better to learn surely what to do.
ŒDIPUS. And will ye ask for one so vile as I?
CREON. Yea, thou, too, now would'st trust the voice of God.
ŒDIPUS. And this I charge thee, yea, and supplicate;
For her within, provide what tomb thou wilt,
For for thine own most meetly thou wilt care;
But never let this city of my fathers
Be sentenced to receive me as its guest;
But suffer me on yon lone hills to dwell,
On my Kithæron, destined for my tomb,
While still I lived, by mother and by sire,
That I may die by those who sought to kill.
And yet this much I know, that no disease,
Nor aught else could have killed me; ne'er from death
Had I been saved but for some evil dread.
As for our fate, let it go where it will;
But for my children, of my boys, O Creon,
Take thou no thought; as men they will not feel,
Where'er they be, the lack of means to live.
But for my two poor girls, all desolate,
To whom my table never brought a meal
Without my presence, but whate'er I touched
They still partook of with me;—care for these;
Yea, let me touch them with my hands, and weep
With them my sorrows. Grant it, O my prince,
O born of noble nature!
Could I but touch them with my hands, I feel
Still I should have them mine, as when I saw.

[*Enter* ANTIGONE *and* ISMENE.]

What say I? What is this?
Do I not hear, ye Gods, their dear, loved tones,
Broken with sobs, and Creon, pitying me,
Hath sent the dearest of my children to me?
Is it not so?

CREON. It is so. I am he who gives thee this,
Knowing the joy thou had'st in them of old.

ŒDIPUS. A blessing on thee! May the Powers on high
Guard thy path better than they guarded mine!
Where are ye, O my children? Come, oh, come
To these your brother's hands, that now have brought
Your father's once bright eyes to this fell pass,
Who, O my children, blind and knowing nought,
Became your father e'en by her who bore me.
I weep for you, (for sight is mine no more,)
Picturing in mind the sad and dreary life
Which waits you at men's hands in years to come;
For to what friendly gatherings will ye go,
Or solemn feasts, from whence, for all the joy
And pride, ye shall not home return in tears?
And when ye come to marriageable age,
Who is there, O my children, rash enough
To make his own the shame that then will fall,
Reproaches on my parents, and on yours?
What evil fails us here? Your father killed
His father, and was wed in incest foul
With her who bore him, and you twain begat
Of her who gave him birth. Such shame as this
Will men lay on you, and who then will dare
To make you his in marriage? None, not one,
My children! but ye needs must waste away,
Unwedded, childless. Thou, Menœkeus' son,
Since thou alone art left a father to them,
(For we their parents perish utterly,)
Suffer them not to wander husbandless,
Nor let thy kindred beg their daily bread,
Nor make them sharers with me in my woe;
But look on them with pity, seeing them
At their age, but for thee, deprived of all.
O noble soul, I pray thee, touch my hand
In token of consent. And ye, my girls,
Had ye the minds to hearken I would fain

Give ye much counsel. As it is, pray for me
To live where'er is meet; and for yourselves
A brighter life than his ye call your sire.

CREON. Enough of tears. Go thou within the house.

ŒDIPUS. I needs must yield, however hard it be.

CREON. In their right season all things prosper best.

ŒDIPUS. Know'st thou my wish?

CREON. Speak and I then shall know.

ŒDIPUS. That thou should'st send me far away from home.

CREON. Thou askest what the Gods alone can give.

ŒDIPUS. As for the Gods, above all men they hate me.

CREON. And therefore it may chance thou gain'st thy wish.

ŒDIPUS. And dost thou promise?

CREON. When I mean them not,
I am not wont to utter idle words.

ŒDIPUS. Lead me, then, hence.

CREON. Go thou, but leave the girls.

ŒDIPUS. Ah, take them not from me!

CREON. Thou must not think
To hold the sway in all things all thy life:
The sway thou had'st did not abide with thee.

CHORUS. Ye men of Thebes, behold this Œdipus,
Who knew the famous riddle and was noblest,
Whose fortune who saw not with envious glances?
And, lo! in what a sea of direst trouble
He now is plunged. From hence the lesson learn ye,
To reckon no man happy till ye witness
The closing day; until he pass the border
Which severs life from death, unscathed by sorrow.

MEDEA

BY

EURIPIDES

(c. 431 B.C.)

Translated into English verse by SIR GILBERT MURRAY

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INTRODUCTION

Unlike Æschylus and Sophocles, who represent Greek idealization, classical form, and restraint, Euripides is much nearer to the mood of our own times; he is romantic in his emphasis on the passion of love, realistic in his analysis of states of mind and feeling, and overflowing with sympathy for the injured or oppressed. He is romantic too, in his love of variety in incident, rhetoric, dialogue, description, rhythm, and scenery. "His dominating passion," says C. E. Vaughn, "is love of effect." Though he is less noble and austere than his predecessors, he is more human and impassioned. Sophocles may be said to have worked in marble, Euripides in clay.

The plays of Euripides, moreover, are inferior in structure to those of Sophocles. He writes long prologues, he frequently employs the *deus ex machina* (the sudden descent of one of the gods at the crucial point in the action to solve the complicated plot), and he neglects to make the chorus an integral part of the play. In answer to those who criticized Euripides for the unhappy endings of his plays, Aristotle insisted that this procedure was right, by pointing in confirmation to the eminent success of the plays on the stage. "Even if his execution be faulty in every other point, Euripides is seen to be nevertheless the most tragic certainly of the dramatists." Although his plays won the prize only five times, they were very popular, even after his death.

Euripides was repeatedly lampooned by Aristophanes, the satiric comedian, because of a skeptical spirit, which like that of his friend, Socrates, questioned the prevailing beliefs of the times. "He lived," writes Sir Gilbert Murray, "in an ever deepening atmosphere of strife and even of hatred, down to the days when 'because almost all in Athens rejoiced at his sufferings,' he took his way to the remote valleys of Macedon to write the *Bacchae* and to die." He did not share the sublime faith of Sophocles and Æschylus in the justice of the

gods and the moral order of the universe. Unlike these predecessors, who justified the ways of the gods against the presumption of man, Euripides, out of pity for struggling humanity, indicted the ways of Destiny. Like Thomas Hardy of our own times, Euripides believed that "Fate is dim, and all the gods obscure." His point of view is well expressed in the lines of Phædra's Nurse in the *Hippolytus*:

"Yet all of man's life is but ailing and dim
And rest upon earth comes never
But if any far off state there be,
Dearer than life to mortality
The hand of the dark hath hold thereof
And mist is under and mist above,
And so we are sick for life and cling
On earth to this nameless and shining thing.
For other life is a fountain sealed
And the deeps below us are unrevealed
And we drift upon legends forever."

The *Medea* can be understood only if seen through Greek eyes, rather than through modern eyes, which have become accustomed to women who vote and gain their livelihood in economic independence of men. Suffragists of past years used to quote Medea's impassioned speech as the first clarion protest against the wrongs of subjugated women. Though the sympathy of Euripides undoubtedly went out to the suffering and exploited woman, as it did to all creatures in pain and distress, though Euripides was in advance of his time in stirring "the warm tears of pity," it is certain that he did not write the *Medea* as a tract on the liberty of women. He was a dramatist, not a pamphleteer.

The most inspiring and ennobling, the most permanent affections were felt by the Greeks for men rather than for women, as we see in such a friendship as that of Achilles for Patroclus. Euripides was ridiculed for attributing such feelings to women. The Greek citizen had little if any romantic passion for his wife, nor did he desire intellectual companionship with her; she existed to bring legitimate children to the State; she was

secluded on the top floor of the house and allowed to associate only with immediate relatives. Aristotle was making a concession when he wrote with respect to women and slaves, "Even a woman may be good, and also a slave; though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless."

To the orthodox Greek citizen, Medea's plea to Jason must have seemed a piece of specious pleading; to us, with our feeling for woman's heavier lot, and for the rights of a wife who has given all to save her husband, the arguments of Jason seem hypocritical, insulting, and monstrously ungracious. No doubt Jason's defense of his course was intended by Euripides to be not wholly hypocritical; Medea as a barbarian had no rights in a Greek state, except such as Jason could win for her. Jason in truth sought the King's daughter, Glauke, not for love, but to make his position secure, and to avoid the miseries of exile for Medea and her children. Medea admitted to Aegeus that Jason's passion was "to wed with a royal house." She was, therefore, not only disturbing the peace of the state by her malignant curses, but by insisting upon her rights as a wife was also sacrificing all other interests, not only Jason's, but her own and those of her children. Such a protest may elicit our sympathy and admiration today; it probably drew unqualified disapproval from the conservatives of the Athenian audience. Moreover, Medea's complaint that had Jason been honest, he would have obtained her consent and aid to the new marriage, reveals another attitude foreign to ours. If it were a question of consent, it could hardly be regarded, from a Greek point of view, as monstrous for Jason to expect her voluntary abdication for the sake of the children. In the words of A. W. Verrall, "To the Greek the position of Jason and Medea at Corinth may well have presented a real though unequal conflict of reason and sentiment; to us the sentiment is all dominant, and the tragedy loses the element of fatality which is so powerful an instrument of pathos."

That Euripides was ahead of his age in portraying Medea's case sympathetically seems certain, for he elaborates her emotional struggles and makes the leader of the chorus and Aegeus condemn Jason's infidelity. From the Aristotelian standpoint, the *Medea* belongs to the second type of plot not

suitable for tragedy—a wicked woman, a barbarian sorceress, triumphing in an overwhelming and revolting vengeance. The ecstasy of her revenge, fascinating as it is, cannot be said to arouse tragic pity and fear. Rather, the spectator leaves the theater convinced that "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

Instead of a tragedy Euripides has written in the *Medea* a stupendous romantic melodrama. Critics have questioned whether the Ægeus episode is not an excrescence, since a sorceress with supernatural powers hardly needed a place of refuge. The scene depicting her alternate pangs of jealousy and maternal affection has also been censured as melodramatic and unconvincing; and it may be said that her character lacks plausibility for in her terrible vengeance she moves as a sorceress above human limitations and sympathies, yet exhibits for our compassion the poignant sufferings of a very human wife.

Upon Seneca, the Roman poet, this passionate and bloody melodrama had a profound influence. His further melodramatizing of it for the court of Nero became in turn the model for the blood-vengeance drama of the Elizabethan playwrights, notably Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

References.

The same authorities cited above (page 8) are good for Euripides. For a treatment of Euripides opposed at every point to the traditional one, see R. B. Appleton, *Euripides the Idealist* (Dutton, New York, 1927). For a vigorous criticism entirely at odds with Appleton, see P. R. Frye, *Romance and Tragedy* p. 195-204 (Marshall-Jones, Boston, 1922). In addition are A. W. Verrall, *Euripides the Rationalist; Four Plays of Euripides;* see also the prefaces of Sir Gilbert Murray written for his translations of Euripides and his *Euripides and His Age* (Holt, New York, 1912); and F. L. Lucas, *Euripides* (Longmans, New York, 1923); R. Carpenter, *The Ethics of Euripides* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1916).

TEXT OF THE PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MEDEA, *daughter of Aietes, King of Colchis*

JASON, *chief of the Argonauts; nephew of Pelias, King of Iolcos in Thessaly*

CREON, *ruler of Corinth*

ÆGEUS, *King of Athens*

NURSE *of Medea*

TWO CHILDREN *of Jason and Medea*

ATTENDANT *on the children*

A MESSENGER

CHORUS *of Corinthian Women, with their* LEADER, *Soldiers and Attendants*

The Scene is laid in Corinth. The play was first acted when Pythodorus was Archon, Olympiad 87, *year* 1 (B.C. 431), *Euphorion was first, Sophocles second, Euripides third, with Medea, Philoctetes, Dictys, and the Harvesters, a Satyr-play.*

THE STORY OF JASON AND MEDEA.

Jason sailed from Thessaly with a band of heroes in the ship, Argo, to the land of the Colchians at the eastern end of the Black Sea, in search of the Golden Fleece. The King of the Colchians compelled Jason to sow the Acre of Death by yoking to the plough a pair of fire-breathing oxen, and also to conquer the dragon that guarded in its coils the Golden Fleece. In these exploits he was helped by the sorcery of Medea, who had fallen madly in love with him. After betraying her father and killing her brother, whose body she dropped into the water in pieces to delay the pursuit of the father, she escaped with Jason, returning in the Argo to Thessaly. Here she contrived to have King Pelias's own daughters kill him in an experiment to renew his youth by cutting him up and boiling the pieces in magic herbs. Naturally the king died. Jason, Medea and their two children were obliged to flee as exiles to Corinth. Here Jason succeeded in getting the family established by marrying, without Medea's consent or aid, Glauke, the fair daughter of King Creon. When the play opens Medea is nursing her wrath and plotting vengeance against Jason.

After her terrible vengeance upon Jason (as depicted in the play), she lived for a time as wife of Ægeus in Athens, but upon the failure of her plans to poison Theseus, his son by another wife, she disappeared in her winged chariot. According to one of the many legends, she is said subsequently to have become immortal, to have been honored with divine worship, and to have married Achilles in Elysium.

MEDEA

[The Scene *represents the front of* Medea's *house in Corinth. A road to the right leads toward the royal castle, one on the left to the harbor. The Nurse is discovered alone.*]

Nurse. Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas
To Colchis through the blue Symplegades:
No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen
Shaped that first oar-blade in the hands of men
Valiant, who won, to save King Pelias' vow,
The fleece All-golden! Never then, I trow,
Mine own princess, her spirit wounded sore
With love of Jason, to the encastled shore
Had sailed of old Iolcos: never wrought
The daughters of King Pelias, knowing not,
To spill their father's life: nor fled in fear,
Hunted for that fierce sin, to Corinth here
With Jason and her babes. This folk at need
Stood friend to her, and she in word and deed
Served alway Jason. Surely this doth bind,
Through all ill days, the hurts of human-kind,
When man and woman in one music move.
But now, the world is angry, and true love
Sick as with poison. Jason doth forsake
My mistress and his own two sons, to make
His couch in a king's chamber. He must wed:
Wed with this Creon's child, who now is head
And chief of Corinth. Wherefore sore betrayed
Medea calleth up the oath they made,
They two, and wakes the claspèd hands again,
The troth surpassing speech, and cries amain

On God in heaven to mark the end, and how
Jason hath paid his debt.
All fasting now
And cold, her body yielded up to pain,
Her days a waste of weeping, she hath lain,
Since first she knew that he was false. Her eyes
Are lifted not; and all her visage lies
In the dust. If friends will speak, she hears no more
Than some dead rock or wave that beats the shore:
Only the white throat in a sudden shame
May writhe, and all alone she moans the name
Of father, and land, and home, forsook that day
For this man's sake, who casteth her away.
Not to be quite shut out from home . . . alas,
She knoweth now how rare a thing that was!
Methinks she hath a dread, not joy, to see
Her children near. 'Tis this that maketh me
Most tremble, lest she do I know not what.
Her heart is no light thing, and useth not
To brook much wrong. I know that woman, aye,
And dread her! Will she creep alone to die
Bleeding in that old room, where still is laid
Lord Jason's bed? She hath for that a blade
Made keen. Or slay the bridegroom and the king,
And win herself God knows what dire thing?
'Tis a fell spirit. Few I ween, shall stir
Her hate unscathed, or lightly humble her.
Ha! 'Tis the children from their games again,
Rested and gay; and all their mother's pain
Forgotten! Young lives ever turn from gloom!

[*The Children and their Attendant come in.*]

Attendant. Thou ancient treasure of my lady's room,
What mak'st thou here before the gates alone,
And alway turning on thy lips some moan
Of old mischances? Will our mistress be
Content, this long time to be left by thee?

NURSE. Gray guard of Jason's children, a good thrall
Hath his own grief, if any hurt befall
His masters. Aye, it holds one's heart! . . . Meseems
I have strayed out so deep in evil dreams,
I longed to rest me here alone, and cry
Medea's wrongs to this still Earth and Sky.

ATTENDANT. How? Are the tears yet running in her eyes?

NURSE. 'T were good to be like thee! . . . Her sorrow lies
Scarce wakened yet, not half its perils wrought.

ATTENDANT. Mad spirit! . . . if a man may speak his thought
Of masters mad.—And nothing in her ears
Hath sounded yet of her last cause for tears!

[*He moves towards the house, but the Nurse checks him.*]

NURSE. What cause, old man? . . . Nay, grudge me not one word.

ATTENDANT. 'T is nothing. Best forget what thou hast heard.

NURSE. Nay, housemate, by thy beard! Hold it not hid
From me. . . . I will keep silence if thou bid.

ATTENDANT. I heard an old man talking, where he sate
At draughts in the sun, beside the fountain gate,
And never thought of me, there standing still
Beside him. And he said, 'T was Creon's will,
Being lord of all this land, that she be sent,
And with her her two sons, to banishment.
Maybe 't is all false. For myself, I know
No further, and I would it were not so.

NURSE. Jason will never bear it—his own sons
Banished,—however hot his anger runs
Against their mother!

ATTENDANT. Old love burneth low
When new love wakes, men say. He is not now
Husband nor father here, nor any kin.

NURSE. But this is ruin! New waves breaking in
To wreck us, ere we are righted from the old!

ATTENDANT. Well, hold thy peace. Our mistress will be told
All in good time. Speak thou no word hereof.
NURSE. My babes! What think ye of your father's love?
God curse him not, he is my master still:
But, oh, to them that loved him, 't is an ill
Friend. . . .
ATTENDANT. And what man on earth is different? How?
Hast thou lived all these years, and learned but now
That every man more loveth his own head
Than other men's? He dreameth of the bed
Of this new bride, and thinks not of his sons.
NURSE. Go: run into the house, my little ones:
All will end happily! . . . Keep them apart:
Let not their mother meet them while her heart
Is darkened. Yester night I saw a flame
Stand in her eye, as though she hated them,
And would I know not what. For sure her wrath
Will never turn nor slumber, till she hath . . .
Go: and if some must suffer, may it be
Not we who love her, but some enemy!
VOICE [*within*]. O shame and pain: O woe is me!
Would I could die in my misery!

[*The Children and the Attendant go in.*]

NURSE. Ah, children, hark! She moves again
Her frozen heart, her sleeping wrath.
In, quick! And never cross her path,
Nor rouse that dark eye in its pain;

That fell sea-spirit, and the dire
Spring of a will untaught, unbowed.
Quick, now!—Methinks this weeping cloud
Hath in its heart some thunder-fire,
Slow gathering, that must flash ere long.
I know not how, for ill or well,
It turns, this uncontrollable
Tempestuous spirit, blind with wrong.

Voice [*within*]. Have I not suffered? Doth it call
No tears? . . . Ha, ye beside the wall
Unfathered children, God hate you
As I am hated, and him, too,
That gat you, and this house and all!
Nurse. For pity! What have they to do,
Babes, with their father's sin? Why call
Thy curse on these? . . . Ah, children, all
These days my bosom bleeds for you.

Rude are the wills of princes: yea,
Prevailing alway, seldom crossed,
On fitful winds their moods are tossed:
'T is best men tread the equal way.

Aye, not with glory but with peace
May the long summers find me crowned:
For gentleness—her very sound
Is magic, and her usages

All wholesome: but the fiercely great
Hath little music on his road,
And falleth, when the hand of God
Shall move, most deep and desolate.

[*During the last words the Leader of the Chorus has entered. Other women follow her.*]

Leader. I heard a voice and a moan,
A voice of the eastern seas:
Hath she found not yet her ease?
Speak, O agèd one.
For I stood afar at the gate,
And there came from within a cry,
And wailing desolate.
Ah, no more joy have I,
For the griefs this house doth see,
And the love it hath wrought in me.
Nurse. There is no house! 'T is gone. The lord
Seeketh a prouder bed: and she

Wastes in her chamber, nor one word
Will hear of care or charity.
VOICE [*within*]. O Zeus, O Earth, O Light,
Will the fire not stab my brain?
What profiteth living? Oh,
Shall I not lift the slow
Yoke, and let Life go,
As a beast out in the night,
To lie, and be rid of pain?
CHORUS—*Some Women.* (A.) "O Zeus, O Earth, O Light":
The cry of a bride forlorn
Heard ye, and wailing born
Of lost delight?
(B.) Why weariest thou this day,
Wild heart, for the bed abhorrèd,
The cold bed in the clay?
Death cometh though no man pray,
Ungarlanded, unadorèd.
Call him not thou.
(C.) If another's arms be now
Where thine have been,
On his head be the sin:
Rend not thy brow!
(D.) All that thou sufferest,
God seeth: Oh, not so sore
Waste nor weep for the breast
That was thine of yore.
VOICE [*within*]. Virgin of Righteousness,
Virgin of hallowed Troth,
Ye marked me when with an oath
I bound him; mark no less
That oath's end. Give me to see
Him and his bride, who sought
My grief when I wronged her not,
Broken in misery,
And all her house. . . . O God,
My mother's home, and the dim

Shore that I left for him,
And the voice of my brother's blood. . . .
NURSE. Oh, wild words! Did ye hear her cry
To them that guard man's faith forsworn,
Themis and Zeus? . . . This wrath newborn
Shall make mad workings ere it die.
CHORUS—*Other Women.* (A.) Would she but come to seek
Our faces, that love her well,
And take to her heart the spell
Of words that speak?
(B.) Alas for the heavy hate
And anger that burneth ever!
Would it but now abate,
Ah God, I love her yet.
And surely my love's endeavor
Shall fail not here.
(C.) Go: from that chamber drear
Forth to the day
Lead her, and say, Oh, say
That we love her dear.
(D.) Go, lest her hand be hard
On the innocent: Ah, let be!
For her grief moves hitherward,
Like an angry sea.
NURSE. That will I: though what words of mine
Or love shall move her? Let them lie
With the old lost labors! . . . Yet her eye—
Know ye the eyes of the wild kine,

The lion flash that guards their brood?
So looks she now if any thrall
Speak comfort, or draw near at all
My mistress in her evil mood.

[*The Nurse goes into the house.*]

CHORUS—*A Woman.* Alas, the bold blithe bards of old
That all for joy their music made,

For feasts and dancing manifold,
That Life might listen and be glad.

But all the darkness and the wrong,
Quick deaths and dim heart-aching things,
Would no man ease them with a sóng
Or music of a thousand strings?

Then song had served us in our need.
What profit, o'er the banquet's swell
That lingering cry that none may heed?
The feast hath filled them: all is well!
CHORUS—*Others.* I heard a song, but it comes no more,
Where the tears ran over:
A keen cry but tired, tired:
A woman's cry for her heart's desired,
For a traitor's kiss and a lost lover.
But a prayer, methinks, yet riseth sore
To God, to Faith, God's ancient daughter—
The Faith that over sundering seas
Drew her to Hellas, and the breeze
Of midnight shivered, and the door
Closed of the salt unsounded water.

[*During the last words* MEDEA *has come out from the house.*]

MEDEA. Women of Corinth, I am come to show
My face, lest ye despise me. For I know
Some heads stand high and fail not, even at night
Alone—far less like this, in all men's sight;
And we, who study not our wayfarings
But feel and cry—Oh we are drifting things,
And evil! For what truth is in men's eyes,
Which search no heart, but in a flash despise
A strange face, shuddering back from one that ne'er
Hath wronged them? . . . Sure, far-comers anywhere,
I know, must bow them and be gentle. Nay,
A Greek himself men praise not, who alway

Should seek his own will recking not. . . . But I—
This thing undreamed of, sudden from on high,
Hath sapped my soul: I dazzle where I stand,
The cup of all life shattered in my hand,
Longing to die—O friends! He, even he,
Whom to know well was all the world to me,
The man I loved, hath proved most evil.—Oh,
Of all things upon earth that bleed and grow,
A herb most bruised is woman. We must pay
Our store of gold, hoarded for that one day,
To buy us some man's love; and lo, they bring
A master of our flesh! There comes the sting
Of the whole shame. And then the jeopardy,
For good or ill, what shall that master be;
Reject she cannot: and if he but stays
His suit, 't is shame on all that woman's days.
So thrown amid new laws, new places, why,
'T is magic she must have, or prophecy—
Home never taught her that—how best to guide
Toward peace this thing that sleepeth at her side.
And she who, laboring long, shall find some way
Whereby her lord may bear with her, nor fray
His yoke too fiercely, blessed is the breath
That woman draws! Else, let her pray for death.
Her lord, if he be wearied of the face
Withindoors, gets him forth; some merrier place
Will ease his heart: but she waits on, her whole
Vision enchainèd on a single soul.
And then, forsooth, 't is they that face the call
Of war, while we sit sheltered, hid from all
Peril!—False mocking! Sooner would I stand
Three times to face their battles, shield in hand,
Than bear one child.

But peace! There cannot be
Ever the same tale told of thee and me.
Thou hast this city, and thy father's home,
And joy of friends, and hope in days to come:

But I, being citiless, am cast aside
By him that wedded me, a savage bride
Won in far seas and left—no mother near,
No brother, not one kinsman anywhere
For harbor in this storm. Therefore of thee
I ask one thing. If chance yet ope to me
Some path, if even now my hand can win
Strength to requite this Jason for his sin,
Betray me not! Oh, in all things but this,
I know how full of fears a woman is,
And faint at need, and shrinking from the light
Of battle: but once spoil her of her right
In man's love, and there moves, I warn thee well,
No bloodier spirit between heaven and hell.

LEADER. I will betray thee not. It is but just,
Thou smite him — And that weeping in the dust
And stormy tears, how should I blame them? . . . Stay:
'T is Creon, lord of Corinth, makes his way
Hither, and bears, methinks, some word of weight.

[*Enter* CREON, *the King, with armed Attendants, from the right.*]

CREON. Thou woman sullen-eyed and hot with hate
Against thy lord, Medea, I here command
That thou and thy two children from this land
Go forth to banishment. Make no delay:
Seeing ourselves, the King, are come this day
To see our charge fulfilled; nor shall again
Look homeward ere we have led thy children twain
And thee beyond our realm's last boundary.

MEDEA. Lost! Lost!
Mine haters at the helm with sail flung free
Pursuing; and for us no beach nor shore
In the endless waters! . . . Yet, though stricken sore,
I still will ask thee, for what crime, what thing
Unlawful, wilt thou cast me out, O King?

CREON. What crime? I fear thee, woman—little need

To cloak my reasons—lest thou work some deed
Of darkness on my child. And in that fear
Reasons enough have part. Thou comest here
A wise-woman confessed, and full of lore
In unknown ways of evil. Thou art sore
In heart, being parted from thy lover's arms.
And more, thou hast made menace . . . so the alarms
But now have reached mine ear . . . on bride and groom,
And him who gave the bride, to work thy doom
Of vengeance. Which, ere yet it be too late,
I sweep aside. I choose to earn thine hate
Of set will now, not palter with the mood
Of mercy, and hereafter weep in blood.

MEDEA. 'T is not the first nor second time, O King,
That fame hath hurt me, and come nigh to bring
My ruin. . . . How can any man, whose eyes
Are wholesome, seek to rear his children wise
Beyond men's wont? Much helplessness in arts
Of common life, and in their townmen's hearts
Envy deep-set . . . so much their learning brings!
Come unto fools with knowledge of new things,
They deem it vanity, not knowledge. Aye,
And men that erst for wisdom were held high,
Feel thee a thorn to fret them, privily
Held higher than they. So hath it been with me.
A wise-woman I am; and for that sin
To divers ill names men would pen me in;
A seed of strife; an eastern dreamer; one
Of brand not theirs; one hard to play upon . . .
Ah, I am not so wondrous wise! And now,
To thee, I am terrible! What fearest thou?
What dire deed? Do I tread so proud a path—
Fear me not thou!—that I should brave the wrath
Of princes? Thou: what hast thou ever done
To wrong me? Granted thine own child to one
Whom thy soul chose.—Ah, *him* out of my heart
I hate; but thou, meseems, hast done thy part

Not ill. And for thine houses' happiness
I hold no grudge. Go: marry, and God bless
Your issues. Only suffer me to rest
Somewhere within this land. Though sore oppressed,
I will be still, knowing mine own defeat.

CREON. Thy words be gentle: but I fear me yet
Lest even now there creep some wickedness
Deep hid within thee. And for that the less
I trust thee now than ere these words began.
A woman quick of wrath, aye, or a man,
Is easier watching than the cold and still.
Up, straight, and find thy road! Mock not my will
With words. This doom is passed beyond recall;
Nor all thy crafts shall help thee, being withal
My manifest foe, to linger at my side.

MEDEA [*suddenly throwing herself down and clinging to* CREON.] Oh, by thy knees! By that new-wedded bride . . .

CREON. 'T is waste of words. Thou shalt not weaken me.

MEDEA. Wilt hunt me? Spurn me when I kneel to thee?

CREON. 'T is mine own house that kneels to me, not thou.

MEDEA. Home, my lost home, how I desire thee now!

CREON. And I mine, and my child, beyond all things.

MEDEA. O Loves of man, what curse is on your wings!

CREON. Blessing or curse, 't is as their chances flow.

MEDEA. Remember, Zeus, the cause of all this woe!

CREON. Oh, rid me of my pains! Up, get thee gone!

MEDEA. What would I with thy pains? I have mine own.

CREON. Up: or, 'fore God, my soldiers here shall fling . . .

MEDEA. Not that! Not that! . . . I do but pray, O King . . .

CREON. Thou wilt not? I must face the harsher task?

MEDEA. I accept mine exile. 'T is not that I ask.

CREON. Why then so wild? Why clinging to mine hand?

MEDEA [*rising*]. For one day only leave me in thy land
At peace, to find some counsel, ere the strain
Of exile fall, some comfort for these twain,
Mine innocents; since others take no thought,

It seems, to save the babes that they begot.
Ah! Thou wilt pity them! Thou also art
A father: thou hast somewhere still a heart
That feels. . . . I reck not of myself: 't is they
That break me, fallen upon so dire a day.
CREON. Mine is no tyrant's mood. Aye, many a time
Ere this my tenderness hath marred the chime
Of wisest counsels. And I know that now
I do mere folly. But so be it! Thou
Shalt have this grace . . . But this I warn thee clear,
If once the morrow's sunlight find thee here
Within my borders, thee or child of thine,
Thou diest! . . . Of this judgment not a line
Shall waver nor abate. So linger on,
If thou needs must, till the next risen sun;
No further. . . . In one day there scarce can be
Those perils wrought whose dread yet haunteth me.

[*Exit* CREON *with his suite.*]

CHORUS. O woman, woman of sorrow,
Where wilt thou turn and flee?
What town shall be thine to-morrow,
What land of all lands that be,
What door of a strange man's home?
Yea, God hath hunted thee,
Medea, forth to the foam
Of a trackless sea.
MEDEA. Defeat on every side; what else?—But oh,
Not here the end is: think it not! I know
For bride and groom one battle yet untried,
And goodly pains for him that gave the bride.
Dost dream I would have groveled to this man,
Save that I won mine end, and shaped my plan
For merry deeds? My lips had never deigned
Speak word with him: my flesh been never stained
With touching. . . . Fool, oh, triple fool! It lay
So plain for him to kill my whole essay

By exile swift: and, nó, he sets me free
This one long day: wherein mine haters three
Shall lie here dead, the father and the bride
And husband—mine, not hers! Oh, I have tried
So many thoughts of murder to my turn,
I know not which best likes me. Shall I burn
Their house with fire? Or stealing past unseen
To Jason's bed—I have a blade made keen
For that—stab, breast to breast, that wedded pair?
Good, but for one thing. When I am taken there,
And killed, they will laugh loud who hate me. . . .
  Nay,
I love the old way best, the simple way
Of poison, where we too are strong as men.
Ah me!
And they being dead—what place shall hold me then?
What friend shall rise, with land inviolate
And trusty doors, to shelter from their hate
This flesh? . . . None anywhere! . . . A little more
I needs must wait: and, if there ope some door
Of refuge, some strong tower to shield me, good:
In craft and darkness I will hunt this blood.
Else, if mine hour be come and no hope nigh,
Then sword in hand, full-willed and sure to die,
I yet will live to slay them. I will wend
Man-like, their road of daring to the end.
  So help me She who of all Gods hath been
The best to me, of all my chosen queen
And helpmate, Hecate, who dwells apart,
The flame of flame, in my fire's inmost heart:
For all their strength, they shall not stab my soul
And laugh thereafter! Dark and full of dole
Their bridal feast shall be, most dark the day
They joined their hands, and hunted me away.
  Awake thee now, Medea! Whatso plot
Thou hast, or cunning, strive and falter not.
On to the peril-point! Now comes the strain

Of daring. Shall they trample thee again?
How? And with Hellas laughing o'er thy fall
While this thief's daughter weds, and weds withal
Jason? . . . A true king was thy father, yea,
And born of the ancient Sun! . . . Thou know'st the way;
And God hath made thee woman, things most vain
For help, but wondrous in the paths of pain.

[MEDEA *goes into the house.*]

CHORUS. Back streams the wave on the ever-running river:
Life, life is changed and the laws of it o'ertrod.
Man shall be the slave, the affrighted, the low-liver!
Man hath forgotten God.
And woman, yea, woman, shall be terrible in story:
The tales too, meseemeth, shall be other than of yore.
For a fear there is that cometh out of Woman and a glory,
And the hard hating voices shall encompass her no more!

The old bards shall cease, and their memory that lingers
Of frail brides and faithless, shall be shriveled as with fire.
For they loved us not, nor knew us: and our lips were dumb,
our fingers
Could wake not the secret of the lyre.
Else, else, O God the Singer, I had sung amid their rages
A long tale of Man and his deeds for good and ill.
But the old World knoweth—'t is the speech of all his ages—
Man's wrong and ours: he knoweth and is still.

CHORUS—*Some Women.* Forth from thy father's home
Thou camest, O heart of fire,
To the Dark Blue Rocks, to the clashing foam,
To the seas of thy desire:

Till the Dark Blue Bar was crossed;
And, lo, by an alien river
Standing, thy lover lost,
Void-armed forever,

Forth yet again, O lowest
Of landless women, a ranger

Of desolate ways, thou goest,
From the walls of the stranger.

CHORUS—*Others.* And the great Oath waxeth weak;
And Ruth, as a thing outstriven,
Is fled, fled, from the shores of the Greek,
Away on the winds of heaven.

Dark is the house afar,
Where an old king called thee daughter;
All that was once thy star
In stormy water,

Dark: and, lo, in the nearer
House that was sworn to love thee,
Another, queenlier, dearer,
Is thronèd above thee.

[*Enter* JASON *from the right.*]

JASON. Oft have I seen, in other days than these,
How a dark temper maketh maladies
No friend can heal. 'T was easy to have kept
Both land and home. It needed but to accept
Unstrivingly the pleasure of our lords.
But thou, for mere delight in stormy words,
Wilt lose all! . . . Now thy speech provokes not me.
Rail on. Of all mankind let Jason be
Most evil; none shall check thee. But for these
Dark threats cast out against the majesties
Of Corinth, count as veriest gain thy path
Of exile. I myself, when princely wrath
Was hot against thee, strove with all good will
To appease the wrath, and wished to keep thee still
Beside me. But thy mouth would never stay
From vanity, blaspheming night and day
Our masters. Therefore thou shalt fly the land.
Yet, even so, I will not hold my hand
From succoring mine own people. Here am I
To help thee, woman, pondering heedfully

Thy new state. For I would not have thee flung
Provisionless away—aye, and the young
Children as well; or lacking aught that will
Of mine can bring thee. Many a lesser ill
Hangs on the heels of exile. . . . Aye, and though
Thou hate me, dream not that my heart can know
Or fashion aught of angry will to thee.

MEDEA. Evil, most evil! . . . since thou grantest me
That comfort, the worst weapon left me now
To smite a coward. . . . Thou comest to me, thou,
Mine enemy! [*Turning to the Chorus.*] Oh, say, how call ye this,
To face, and smile, the comrade whom his kiss
Betrayed? Scorn? Insult? Courage? None of these:
'T is but of all man's inward sicknesses
The vilest, that he knoweth not of shame,
Nor pity! Yet I praise him that he came . . .
To me it shall bring comfort, once to clear
My heart on thee, and thou shalt wince to hear.
I will begin with that, 'twixt me and thee,
That first befell. I saved thee. I saved thee—
Let thine own Greeks be witness, every one
That sailed on Argo—saved thee, sent alone
To yoke with yokes the bulls of fiery breath,
And sow that Acre of the Lords of Death;
And mine own ancient Serpent, who did keep
The Golden Fleece, the eyes that knew not sleep,
And shining coils, him also did I smite
Dead for thy sake, and lifted up the light
That bade thee live. Myself, uncounselèd,
Stole forth from father and from home, and fled
Where dark Iolcos under Pelion lies,
With thee—Oh, single-hearted more than wise!
I murdered Pelias, yea, in agony,
By his own daughters' hands, for sake of thee;
I swept their house like War.—And hast thou then
Accepted all—O evil yet again!—

And cast me off and taken thee for bride
Another? And with children at thy side!
One could forgive a childless man. But no:
I have borne thee children . . .
Is sworn faith so low
And weak a thing? I understand it not.
Are the old gods dead? Are the old laws forgot,
And new laws made? Since not my passioning,
But thine own heart, doth cry thee for a thing
Forsworn.

[*She catches sight of her own hand which she has thrown out to denounce him.*]

Poor, poor right hand of mine, whom he
Did cling to, and these knees, so cravingly,
We are unclean, thou and I; we have caught the stain
Of bad men's flesh . . . and dreamed our dreams in vain.
Thou comest to befriend me? Give me, then,
Thy counsel. 'T is not that I dream again
For good from thee: but, questioned, thou wilt show
The viler. Say: now whither shall I go?
Back to my father? Him I did betray,
And all his land, when we two fled away.
To those poor Peliad maids? For them 't were good
To take me in, who spilled their father's blood. . . .
Aye, so my whole life stands! There were at home
Who loved me well: to them I am become
A curse. And the first friends who sheltered me,
Whom most I should have spared, to pleasure thee
I have turned to foes. Oh, therefore hast thou laid
My crown upon me, blest of many a maid
In Hellas, now I have won what all did crave,
Thee, the world-wondered lover and the brave;
Who this day looks and sees me banished, thrown
Away with these two babes, all, all, alone . . .
Oh, merry mocking when the lamps are red:
"Where go the bridegroom's babes to beg their bread

In exile, and the woman who gave all
To save him?"
O great God, shall gold withal
Bear thy clear mark, to sift the base and fine,
And o'er man's living visage runs no sign
To show the lie within, ere all too late?
LEADER. Dire and beyond all healing is the hate
When hearts that loved are turned to enmity.
JASON. In speech at least, mescemeth, I must be
Not evil; but, as some old pilot goes
Furled to his sail's last edge, when danger blows
Too fiery, run before the wind and swell,
Woman, of thy loud storms.—And thus I tell
My tale. Since thou wilt build so wondrous high
Thy deeds of service in my jeopardy,
To all my crew and quest I know but one
Savior, of gods or mortals one alone,
The Cyprian. Oh, thou hast both brain and wit,
Yet underneath . . . nay, all the tale of it
Were graceless telling; how sheer love, a fire
Of poison-shafts, compelled thee with desire
To save me. But enough. I will not score
That count too close. 'T was good help: and therefor
I give thee thanks, howe'er the help was wrought.
Howbeit, in my deliverance, thou has got
Far more than given. A good Greek land hath been
Thy lasting home, not barbary. Thou hast seen
Our ordered life, and justice, and the long
Still grasp of law not changing with the strong
Man's pleasure. Then, all Hellas far and near
Hath learned thy wisdom, and in every ear
Thy fame is. Had thy days run by unseen
On that last edge of the world, where then had been
The story of great Medea? Thou and I . . .
What worth to us were treasures heapèd high
In rich kings' rooms; what worth a voice of gold
More sweet than ever rang from Orpheus old,

Unless our deeds have glory?
Speak I so,
Touching the Quest I wrought, thyself did throw
The challenge down. Next for thy caviling
Of wrath at mine alliance with a king,
Here thou shalt see I both was wise, and free
From touch of passion, and a friend to thee
Most potent, and my children . . . Nay, be still!
When first I stood in Corinth, clogged with ill
From many a desperate mischance, what bliss
Could I that day have dreamed of, like to this,
To wed with a king's daughter, I exiled
And beggared? Not—what makes thy passion wild—
From loathing of thy bed; not overfraught
With love for this new bride; not that I sought
To upbuild mine house with offspring: 't is enough,
What thou hast borne: I make no word thereof:
But, first and greatest, that we all might dwell
In a fair house and want not, knowing well
That poor men have no friends, but far and near
Shunning and silence. Next, I sought to rear
Our sons in nurture worthy of my race,
And, raising brethren to them, in one place
Join both my houses, and be all from now
Prince-like and happy. What more need hast thou
Of children? And for me, it serves my star
To link in strength the children that now are
With those that shall be.
Have I counseled ill?
Not thine own self would say it, couldst thou still
One hour thy jealous flesh.—'T is ever so!
Who looks for more in women? When the flow
Of love runs plain, why, all the world is fair:
But, once there fall some ill chance anywhere
To baulk that thirst, down in swift hate are trod
Men's dearest aims and noblest. Would to God
We mortals by some other seed could raise

Our fruits, and no blind women block our ways!
Then had there been no curse to wreck mankind.

LEADER. Lord Jason, very subtly hast thou twined
Thy speech: but yet, though all athwart thy will
I speak, this is not well thou dost, but ill,
Betraying her who loved thee and was true.

MEDEA. Surely I have my thoughts, and not a few
Have held me strange. To me it seemeth, when
A crafty tongue is given to evil men
'T is like to wreck, not help them. Their own brain
Tempts them with lies to dare and dare again,
Till . . . no man hath enough of subtlety.
As thou—be not so seeming-fair to me
Nor deft of speech. One word will make thee fall.
Wert thou not false, 't was thine to tell me all,
And charge me help thy marriage path, as I
Did love thee; not befool me with a lie.

JASON. An easy task had that been! Aye, and thou
A loving aid, who canst not, even now,
Still that loud heart that surges like the tide!

MEDEA. That moved thee not. Thine old barbarian bride,
The dog out of the east who loved thee sore,
She grew gray-haired, she served thy pride no more.

JASON. Now understand for once! The girl to me
Is nothing, in this web of sovereignty
I hold. I do but seek to save, even yet,
Thee: and for brethren to our sons beget
Young kings, to prosper all our lives again.

MEDEA. God shelter me from prosperous days of pain,
And wealth that maketh wounds about my heart.

JASON. Wilt change that prayer, and choose a wiser part?
Pray not to hold true sense for pain, nor rate
Thyself unhappy, being too fortunate.

MEDEA. Aye, mock me; thou hast where to lay thine head,
But I go naked to mine exile.

JASON. Tread
Thine own path! Thou hast made it all to be.

MEDEA. How? By seducing and forsaking thee?

JASON. By those vile curses on the royal halls
Let loose. . . .

MEDEA. On thy house also, as chance falls,
I am a living curse.

JASON. Oh, peace! Enough
Of these vain wars: I will no more thereof.
If thou wilt take from all that I possess
Aid for these babes and thine own helplessness
Of exile, speak thy bidding. Here I stand
Full-willed to succor thee with stintless hand,
And send my signet to old friends that dwell
On foreign shores, who will entreat thee well.
Refuse, and thou shalt do a deed most vain.
But cast thy rage away, and thou shalt gain
Much, and lose little for thine anger's sake.

MEDEA. I will not seek thy friends. I will not take
Thy givings. Give them not. Fruits of a stem
Unholy bring no blessing after them.

JASON. Now God in heaven be witness, all my heart
Is willing, in all ways, to do its part
For thee and for thy babes. But nothing good
Can please thee. In sheer savageness of mood
Thou drivest from thee every friend. Wherefore
I warrant thee, thy pains shall be the more.

[*He goes slowly away.*]

MEDEA. Go: thou art weary for the new delight
Thou wooest, so long tarrying out of sight
Of her sweet chamber. Go, fulfill thy pride,
O bridegroom! For it may be, such a bride
Shall wait thee,—yea, God heareth me in this—
As thine own heart shall sicken ere it kiss.

CHORUS. Alas, the Love that falleth like a flood,
Strong-winged and transitory:
Why praise ye him? What beareth he of good
To man, or glory?

Yet Love there is that moves in gentleness,
Heart-filling, sweetest of all powers that bless.
Loose not on me, O Holder of man's heart,
  Thy golden quiver,
Nor steep in poison of desire the dart
  That heals not ever.

The pent hate of the word that cavileth,
  The strife that hath no fill,
Where once was fondness; and the mad heart's breath
  For strange love panting still:
O Cyprian, cast me not on these; but sift,
Keen-eyed, of love the good and evil gift,
Make Innocence my friend, God's fairest star,
  Yea, and abate not
The rare sweet beat of bosoms without war,
  That love, and hate not.
  Chorus—*Others.* Home of my heart, land of my own,
  Cast me not, nay, for pity,
Out on my ways, helpless, alone,
Where the feet fail in the mire and stone,
  A woman without a city.
Ah, not that! Better the end:
  The green grave cover me rather,
If a break must come in the days I know,
And the skies be changed and the earth below;
For the weariest road that man may wend
  Is forth from the home of his father.

Lo, we have seen: 't is not a song
  Sung, nor learned of another.
For whom hast thou in thy direst wrong
For comfort? Never a city strong
  To hide thee, never a brother.
Ah, but the man—cursèd be he,
  Cursèd beyond recover,
Who openeth, shattering, seal by seal,
A friend's clean heart, then turns his heel,

Deaf unto love: never in me
Friend shall he know nor lover.

[*While* MEDEA *is waiting downcast, seated upon her doorstep, there passes from the left a traveler with followers. As he catches sight of* MEDEA, *he stops.*]

ÆGEUS. Have joy, Medea! 'T is the homeliest
Word that old friends can greet with, and the best.
MEDEA [*looking up, surprised*]. Oh, joy on thee, too, Ægeus, gentle king
Of Athens!—But whence com'st thou journeying?
ÆGEUS. From Delphi now and the old encaverned stair. . . .
MEDEA. Where Earth's heart speaks in song? What mad'st thou there?
ÆGEUS. Prayed heaven for children—the same search alway.
MEDEA. Children? Ah God! Art childless to this day?
ÆGEUS. So God hath willed. Childless and desolate.
MEDEA. What word did Phœbus speak, to change thy fate?
ÆGEUS. Riddles, too hard for mortal man to read.
MEDEA. Which I may hear?
ÆGEUS. Assuredly: they need
A rarer wit.
MEDEA. How said he?
ÆGEUS. Not to spill
Life's wine, nor seek for more. . . .
MEDEA. Until?
ÆGEUS. Until
I tread the hearth-stone of my sires of yore.
MEDEA. And what should bring thee here, by Creon's shore?
ÆGEUS. One Pittheus know'st thou, high lord of Trozen?
MEDEA. Aye, Pelops' son, a man most pure of sin.
ÆGEUS. Him I would ask, touching Apollo's will.
MEDEA. Much use in God's ways hath he, and much skill.
ÆGEUS. And, long years back he was my battle-friend,
The truest e'er man had.

MEDEA. Well, may God send
Good hap to thee, and grant all thy desire.
ÆGEUS. But thou . . .? Thy frame is wasted, and the fire
Dead in thine eyes.
MEDEA. Ægeus, my husband is
The falsest man in the world.
ÆGEUS. What word is this?
Say clearly what thus makes thy visage dim?
MEDEA. He is false to me, who never injured him.
ÆGEUS. What hath he done? Show all, that I may see.
MEDEA. Ta'en him a wife; a wife, set over me
To rule his house!
ÆGEUS. He hath not dared to do,
Jason, a thing so shameful?
MEDEA. Aye, 't is true:
And those he loved of yore have no place now.
ÆGEUS. Some passion sweepeth him? Or is it thou
He turns from?
MEDEA. Passion, passion to betray
His dearest!
ÆGEUS. Shame be his, so fallen away
From honor!
MEDEA. Passion to be near a throne,
A king's heir!
ÆGEUS. How, who gives the bride? Say on.
MEDEA. Creon, who o'er all Corinth standeth chief.
ÆGEUS. Woman, thou hast indeed much cause for grief.
MEDEA. 'T is ruin.—And they have cast me out as well.
ÆGEUS. Who? 'T is a new wrong this, and terrible.
MEDEA. Creon the king, from every land and shore. . . .
ÆGEUS. And Jason suffers him? Oh, 't is too sore!
MEDEA. He loveth to bear bravely ills like these!
But, Ægeus, by thy beard, oh, by thy knees,
I pray, thee, and I give me for thine own,
Thy suppliant, pity me! Oh, pity one
So miserable. Thou never wilt stand there
And see me cast out friendless to despair.

Give me a home in Athens . . . by the fire
Of thine own hearth! Oh, so may thy desire
Of children be fulfilled of God, and thou
Die happy! . . . Thou canst know not; even now
Thy prize is won! I, I will make of thee
A childless man no more. The seed shall be,
I swear it, sown. Such magic herbs I know.

ÆGEUS. Woman, indeed my heart goes forth to show
This help to thee, first for religion's sake,
Then for thy promised hope, to heal my ache
Of childlessness. 'T is this hath made mine whole
Life as a shadow, and starved out my soul.
But thus it stands with me. Once make thy way
To Attic earth, I, as in law I may,
Will keep thee and befriend. But in this land,
Where Creon rules, I may not raise my hand
To shelter thee. Move of thine own essay
To seek my house, there thou shalt alway stay,
Inviolate, never to be seized again.
But come thyself from Corinth. I would fain
Even in foreign eyes be alway just.

MEDEA. 'T is well. Give me an oath wherein to trust
And all that man could ask thou hast granted me.

ÆGEUS. Dost trust me not? Or what thing troubleth thee?

MEDEA. I trust thee. But so many, far and near,
Do hate me—all King Pelias' house, and here
Creon. Once bound by oaths and sanctities
Thou canst not yield me up for such as these
To drag from Athens. But a spoken word,
No more, to bind thee, which no God hath heard. . . .
The embassies, methinks, would come and go:
They all are friends to thee. . . . Ah me, I know
Thou wilt not list to me! So weak am I,
And they full-filled with gold and majesty.

ÆGEUS. Methinks 't is a far foresight, this thine oath.
Still, if thou so wilt have it, nothing loath
Am I to serve thee. Mine own hand is so

The stronger, if I have this plea to show
Thy persecutors: and for thee withal
The bond more sure.—On what god shall I call?

MEDEA. Swear by the Earth thou treadest, by the Sun,
Sire of my sires, and all the gods as one. . . .

ÆGEUS. To do what thing or not do? Make all plain.

MEDEA. Never thyself to cast me out again.
Nor let another, whatsoe'er his plea,
Take me, while thou yet livest and art free.

ÆGEUS. Never: so hear me, Earth, and the great star
Of daylight, and all other gods that are:

MEDEA. 'T is well: and if thou falter from thy vow . . . ?

ÆGEUS. God's judgment on the godless break my brow!

MEDEA. Go! Go thy ways rejoicing.—All is bright
And clear before me. Go: and ere the night
Myself will follow, when the deed is done
I purpose, and the end I thirst for won.

[ÆGEUS *and his train depart.*]

CHORUS. Farewell: and Maia's guiding Son
Back lead thee to thy hearth and fire,
Ægeus; and all the long desire
That wasteth thee, at last be won:
Our eyes have seen thee as thou art,
A gentle and a righteous heart.

MEDEA. God, and God's Justice, and ye blinding Skies!
At last the victory dawneth! Yea, mine eyes
See, and my foot is on the mountain's brow.
Mine enemies! Mine enemies, oh, now
Atonement cometh! Here at my worst hour
A friend is found, a very port of power
To save my shipwreck. Here will I make fast
Mine anchor, and escape them at the last
In Athens' wallèd hill.—But ere the end
'T is meet I show thee all my counsel, friend:
Take it, no tale to make men laugh withal!
Straightway to Jason I will send some thrall

To entreat him to my presence. Comes he here,
Then with soft reasons will I feed his ear,
How *his* will now is *my* will, how all things
Are well, touching this marriage-bed of kings
For which I am betrayed—all wise and rare
And profitable! Yet will I make one prayer,
That my two children be no more exiled
But stay. . . . Oh, not that I would leave a child
Here upon angry shores till those have laughed
Who hate me: 't is that I will slay by craft
The king's daughter. With gifts they shall be sent,
Gifts to the bride to spare their banishment
Fine robings and a carcanet of gold.
Which raiment let her once but take, and fold
About her, a foul death that girl shall die
And all who touch her in her agony.
Such poison shall they drink, my robe and wreath!
Howbeit, of that no more. I gnash my teeth
Thinking on what a path my feet must tread
Thereafter. I shall lay those children dead—
Mine, whom no hand shall steal from me away!
Then, leaving Jason childless, and the day
As night above him, I will go my road
To exile, flying, flying from the blood
Of these my best-beloved, and having wrought
All horror, so but one thing reach me not,
The laugh of them that hate us.
Let it come!
What profits life to me? I have no home,
No country now, nor shield from any wrong.
That was my evil hour, when down the long
Halls of my father out I stole, my will
Chained by a Greek man's voice, who still, oh, still,
If God yet live, shall all requited be.
For never child of mine shall Jason see
Hereafter living, never child beget
From his new bride, who this day, desolate

Even as she made me desolate, shall die
Shrieking amid my poisons. . . . Names have I
Among your folk? One light? One weak of hand?
An eastern dreamer?—Nay, but with the brand
Of strange suns burnt, my hate, by God above,
A perilous thing, and passing sweet my love!
For these it is that make life glorious.

LEADER. Since thou hast bared thy fell intent to us,
I, loving thee, and helping in their need
Man's laws, adjure thee, dream not of this deed!

MEDEA. There is no other way.—I pardon thee
Thy littleness, who art not wronged like me.

LEADER. Thou canst not kill the fruit thy body bore!

MEDEA. Yes: if the man I hate be pained the more.

LEADER. And thou made miserable, most miserable?

MEDEA. Oh, let it come! All words of good or ill
Are wasted now.

[*She claps her hands: the Nurse comes out from the house.*]

Ho, woman; get thee gone
And lead lord Jason hither. . . . There is none
Like thee, to work me these high services.
But speak no word of what my purpose is,
As thou art faithful, thou, and bold to try
All succors, and a woman even as I!

[*The Nurse departs.*]

CHORUS. The sons of Erechtheus, the olden,
Whom high gods planted of yore
In an old land of heaven upholden,
A proud land untrodden of war:
They are hungered, and, lo, their desire
With wisdom is fed as with meat:
In their skies is a shining of fire,
A joy in the fall of their feet:
And thither, with manifold dowers,
From the North, from the hills, from the morn,

The Muses did gather their powers,
That a child of the Nine should be born;
And Harmony, sown as the flowers,
Grew gold in the acres of corn.

And Cephisus, the fair-flowing river—
The Cyprian dipping her hand
Hath drawn of his dew, and the shiver
Of her touch is as joy in the land.
For her breathing in fragrance is written,
And in music her path as she goes,
And the cloud of her hair, it is litten
With stars of the wind-woven rose.
So fareth she ever and ever,
And forth of her bosom is blown,
As dews on the winds of the river,
An hunger of passions unknown,
Strong Loves of all godlike endeavor,
Whom Wisdom shall throne on her throne.

CHORUS—*Some Women.* But Cephisus the fair-flowing,
Will he bear thee on his shore?
Shall the land that succors all, succor thee,
Who art foul among thy kind,
With the tears of children blind?
Dost thou see the red gash growing,
Thine own burden dost thou see?
Every side, every way,
Lo, we kneel to thee and pray:
By thy knees, by thy soul, O woman wild!
One at least thou canst not slay,
Not thy child!

CHORUS—*Others.* Hast thou ice that thou shalt bind it
To thy breast, and make thee dead
To thy children, to thine own spirit's pain?
When the hand knows what it dares,
When thine eyes look into theirs,
Shalt thou keep by tears unblinded

Thy dividing of the slain?
These be deeds not for thee:
These be things that cannot be!
Thy babes—though thine hardihood be fell,
When they cling about thy knee,
'T will be well!

[*Enter* JASON.]

JASON. I answer to thy call. Though full of hate
Thou be, I yet will not so far abate
My kindness for thee, nor refuse mine ear.
Say in what new desire thou hast called me here.

MEDEA. Jason, I pray thee, for my words but now
Spoken, forgive me. My bad moods. . . . Oh, thou
At least wilt strive to bear with them! There be
Many old deeds of love 'twixt me and thee.
Lo, I have reasoned with myself apart
And chidden: "Why must I be mad, O heart
Of mine: and raging against one whose word
Is wisdom: making me a thing abhorred
To them that rule the land, and to mine own
Husband, who doth but that which, being done,
Will help us all—to wed a queen, and get
Young kings for brethren to my sons? And yet
I rage alone, and cannot quit my rage—
What aileth me?—when God sends harborage
So simple? Have I not my children? Know
I not we are but exiles, and must go
Beggared and friendless else?" Thought upon thought
So pressed me, till I knew myself full-fraught
With bitterness of heart and blinded eyes.
So now—I give thee thanks: and hold thee wise
To have caught this anchor for our aid. The fool
Was I; who should have been thy friend, thy tool;
Gone wooing with thee, stood at thy bedside
Serving, and welcomed duteously thy bride.
But, as we are, we are—I will not say

Mere evil—women! Why must thou to-day
Turn strange, and make thee like some evil thing,
Childish, to meet my childish passioning?
See, I surrender: and confess that then
I had bad thoughts, but now have turned again
And found my wiser mind.

[*She claps her hands.*]

Ho, children! Run
Quickly! Come hither, out into the sun,

[*The Children come from the house, followed by their Attendant.*]

And greet your father. Welcome him with us,
And throw quite, quite away, as mother does,
Your anger against one so dear. Our peace
Is made, and all the old bad wars shall cease
Forever.—Go, and take his hand. . . .

[*As the Children go to* JASON, *she suddenly bursts into tears. The Children quickly return to her; she recovers herself, smiling amid her tears.*]

Ah me,
I am full of hidden horrors! . . . Shall it be
A long time more, my children, that ye live
To reach to me those dear, dear arms? . . . Forgive!
I am so ready with my tears to-day,
And full of dread. . . . I sought to smooth away
The long strife with your father, and, lo, now
I have all drowned with tears this little brow!

[*She wipes the child's face.*]

LEADER. O'er mine eyes too there stealeth a pale tear:
Let the evil rest, O God, let it rest here!

JASON. Woman, indeed I praise thee now, nor say
Ill of thine other hour. 'T is nature's way,
A woman needs must stir herself to wrath,
When work of marriage by so strange a path
Crosseth her lord. But thou, thine heart doth wend

The happier road. Thou hast seen, ere quite the end,
What choice must needs be stronger: which to do
Shows a wise-minded woman. . . . And for you,
Children; your father never has forgot
Your needs. If God but help him, he hath wrought
A strong deliverance for your weakness. Yea,
I think you, with your brethren, yet one day
Shall be the mightiest voices in this land.
Do you grow tall and strong. Your father's hand
Guideth all else, and whatso power divine
Hath alway helped him. . . . Ah, may it be mine
To see you yet in manhood, stern of brow,
Strong-armed, set high o'er those that hate me. . . .
How?
Woman, thy face is turned. Thy cheek is swept
With pallor of strange tears. Dost not accept
Gladly and of good will my benisons?

MEDEA. 'T is nothing. Thinking of these little ones. . . .

JASON. Take heart, then. I will guard them from all ill.

MEDEA. I do take heart. Thy word I never will
Mistrust. Alas, a woman's bosom bears
But woman's courage, a thing born for tears.

JASON. What ails thee?—All too sore thou weepest there.

MEDEA. I was their mother! When I heard thy prayer
Of long life for them, there swept over me
A horror, wondering how these things shall be.
But for the matter of my need that thou
Should speak with me, part I have said, and now
Will finish.—Seeing it is the king's behest
To cast me out from Corinth . . . aye, and best,
Far best, for me—I know it—not to stay
Longer to trouble thee and those who sway
The realm, being held to all their house a foe. . . .
Behold, I spread my sails, and meekly go
To exile. But our children. . . . Could this land
Be still their home awhile: could thine own hand

But guide their boyhood. . . . Seek the king, and pray
His pity, that he bid thy children stay!

JASON. He is hard to move. Yet surely 't were well done.

MEDEA. Bid *her*—for thy sake, for a daughter's boon. . . .

JASON. Well thought! Her I can fashion to my mind.

MEDEA. Surely. She is a woman like her kind. . . .
Yet I will aid thee in thy labor; I
Will send her gifts, the fairest gifts that lie
In the hands of men, things of the days of old,
Fine robings and a carcanet of gold,
By the boys' hands.—Go, quick, some handmaiden,
And fetch the raiment.

[*A handmaid goes into the house.*]

Ah, her cup shall then
Be filled indeed! what more should woman crave,
Being wed with thee, the bravest of the brave,
And girt with raiment which of old the sire
Of all my house, the Sun, gave, steeped in fire,
To his own fiery race?

[*The handmaid has returned bearing the gifts.*]

Come, children, lift
With heed these caskets. Bear them as your gift
To her, being bride and princess and of right
Blessed!—I think she will not hold them light.

JASON. Fond woman, why wilt empty thus thine hand
Of treasure? Doth King Creon's castle stand
In stint of raiment, or in stint of gold?
Keep these, and make no gift. For if she hold
Jason of any worth at all, I swear
Chattels like these will not weigh more with her.

MEDEA. Ah, chide me not! 'T is written, gifts persuade
The gods in heaven; and gold is stronger made
Than words innumerable to bend men's ways.
Fortune is hers. God maketh great her days:
Young and a crownèd queen! And banishment
For those two babes. . . . I would not gold were spent,

But life's blood, ere that come.
My children, go
Forth into those rich halls, and, bowing low,
Beseech your father's bride, whom I obey,
Ye be not, of her mercy, cast away
Exiled: and give the caskets—above all
Mark this!—to none but her, to hold withal
And keep. . . . Go quick! And let your mother know
Soon the good tiding that she longs for. . . . Go!

[*She goes quickly into the house.* JASON *and the Children with their Attendant depart.*]

CHORUS. Now I have no hope more of the children's living;
No hope more. They are gone forth unto death.
The bride, she taketh the poison of their giving:
She taketh the bounden gold and openeth;
And the crown, the crown, she lifteth about her brow,
Where the light brown curls are clustering. No hope now!

O sweet and cloudy gleam of the garments golden!
The robe, it hath clasped her breast and the crown her head.
Then, then, she decketh the bride, as a bride, of olden
Story, that goeth pale to the kiss of the dead.
For the ring hath closed, and the portion of death is there;
And she flieth not, but perisheth unaware.

CHORUS—*Some Women.* O bridegroom, bridegroom of the kiss so cold,
Art thou wed with princes, art thou girt with gold,
Who know'st not, suing
For thy child's undoing,
And, on her thou lovest, for a doom untold?
How art thou fallen from thy place of old!

CHORUS—*Others.* O Mother, mother, what hast *thou* to reap,
When the harvest cometh, between wake and sleep?
For a heart unslaken,
For a troth forsaken,

Lo, babes that call thee from a bloody deep:
And thy love returns not. Get thee forth and weep!

[*Enter the Attendant with the two Children;* MEDEA *comes out from the house.*]

ATTENDANT. Mistress, these children from their banishment
Are spared. The royal bride hath mildly bent
Her hand to accept thy gifts, and all is now
Peace for the children.—Ha, why standest thou
Confounded, when good fortune draweth near?

MEDEA. Ah, God!

ATTENDANT. This chimes not with the news I bear.

MEDEA. O God, have mercy!

ATTENDANT. Is some word of wrath
Here hidden that I knew not of? And hath
My hope to give thee joy so cheated me?

MEDEA. Thou givest what thou givest: I blame not thee.

ATTENDANT. Thy brows are all o'ercast: thine eyes are filled. . . .

MEDEA. For bitter need, old man! The gods have willed,
And mine own evil mind, that this should come.

ATTENDANT. Take heart! Thy sons one day will bring thee home.

MEDEA. Home? . . . I have others to send home. Woe's me!

ATTENDANT. Be patient. Many a mother before thee
Hath parted from her children. We poor things
Of men must needs endure what fortune brings.

MEDEA. I will endure.—Go thou within, and lay
All ready that my sons may need to-day.

[*The Attendant goes into the house.*]

O children, children mine: and you have found
A land and home, where, leaving me discrowned
And desolate, forever you will stay,
Motherless children! And I go my way
To other lands, an exile, ere you bring

Your fruits home, ere I see you prospering
Or know your brides, or deck the bridal bed,
All flowers, and lift your torches overhead.
Oh, cursèd be mine own hard heart! 'T was all
In vain, then, that I reared you up, so tall
And fair; in vain I bore you, and was torn
With those long pitiless pains, when you were born.
Ah, wondrous hopes my poor heart had in you,
How you would tend me in mine age, and do
The shroud about me with your own dear hands,
When I lay cold, blessèd in all the lands
That knew us. And that gentle thought is dead!
You go, and I live on, to eat the bread
Of long years, to myself most full of pain.
And never your dear eyes, never again,
Shall see your mother, far away being thrown
To other shapes of life. . . . My babes, my own,
Why gaze ye so?—What is it that ye see?
And laugh with that last laughter? . . . Woe is me,
What shall I do?
Women, my strength is gone,
Gone like a dream, since once I looked upon
Those shining faces. . . . I can do it not.
Good-bye to all the thoughts that burned so hot
Aforetime! I will take and hide them far,
Far, from men's eyes. Why should I seek a war
So blind: by these babes' wounds to sting again
Their father's heart, and win myself a pain
Twice deeper? Never, never! I forget
Henceforward all I labored for.
And yet,
What is it with me? Would I be a thing
Mocked at, and leave mine enemies to sting
Unsmitten? It must be. O coward heart,
Ever to harbor such soft words!—Depart
Out of my sight, ye twain.

[*The Children go in.*]

And they whose eyes
Shall hold it sin to share my sacrifice,
On their heads be it! My hand shall swerve not now.

Ah, Ah, thou Wrath within me! Do not thou,
Do not. . . . Down, down, thou tortured thing, and spare
My children! They will dwell with us, aye, there
Far off, and give thee peace.
Too late, too late!
By all Hell's living agonies of hate,
They shall not take my little ones alive
To make their mock with! Howsoe'er I strive
The thing is doomed; it shall not escape now
From being. Aye, the crown is on the brow,
And the robe girt, and in the robe that high
Queen dying.
I know all. Yet . . . seeing that I
Must go so long a journey, and these twain
A longer yet and darker, I would fain
Speak with them, ere I go.

[*A handmaid brings the Children out again.*]

Come, children; stand
A little from me. There. Reach out your hand,
Your right hand—so—to mother; and good-by!

[*She has kept them hitherto at arm's-length: but at the touch of their hands, her resolution breaks down, and she gathers them passionately into her arms.*]

Oh, darling hand! Oh, darling mouth, and eye,
And royal mien, and bright brave faces clear,
May you be blessèd, but not here! What here
Was yours, your father stole. . . . Ah God, the glow
Of cheek on cheek, the tender touch; and oh,
Sweet scent of childhood. . . . Go! Go! . . . Am I
blind? . . .

Mine eyes can see not, when I look to find
Their places. I am broken by the wings
Of evil. . . . Yea, I know to what bad things
I go, but louder than all thought doth cry
Anger, which maketh man's worst misery.

[*She follows the Children into the house.*]

CHORUS. My thoughts have roamed a cloudy land,
And heard a fierier music fall
Than woman's heart should stir withal:
And yet some Muse majestical,
Unknown, hath hold of woman's hand,
Seeking for Wisdom—not in all.
A feeble seed, a scattered band,
Thou yet shalt find in lonely places,
Not dead amongst us, nor our faces
Turned alway from the Muses' call.

And thus my thought would speak: that she
Who ne'er hath borne a child nor known
Is nearer to felicity:
Unlit she goeth and alone,
With little understanding what
A child's touch means of joy or woe,
And many toils she beareth not.

But they within whose garden fair
That gentle plant hath blown, they go
Deep-written all their days with care—
To rear the children, to make fast
Their hold, to win them wealth; and then
Much darkness, if the seed at last
Bear fruit in good or evil men!
And one thing at the end of all
Abideth, that which all men dread:
The wealth is won, the limbs are bred
To manhood, and the heart withal

Honest: and, lo, where Fortune smiled,
Some change, and what hath fallen? Hark!
'T is death slow winging to the dark,
And in his arms what was thy child.

What therefore doth it bring of gain
To man, whose cup stood full before,
That God should send this one thing more
Of hunger and of dread, a door
Set wide to every wind of pain?

[MEDEA *comes out alone from the house.*]

MEDEA. Friends, this long hour I wait on Fortune's eyes,
And strain my senses in a hot surmise
What passeth on that hill.—Ha! even now
There comes . . . 't is one of Jason's men, I trow.
His wild-perturbèd breath doth warrant me
The tidings of some strange calamity.

[*Enter Messenger*]

MESSENGER. O dire and ghastly deed! Get thee away,
Medea! Fly! Nor let behind thee stay
One chariot's wing, one keel that sweeps the seas. . . .

MEDEA. And what hath chanced, to cause such flights as these?

MESSENGER. The maiden princess lieth—and her sire,
The king—both murdered by thy poison-fire.

MEDEA. Most happy tiding! Which thy name prefers
Henceforth among my friends and well-wishers.

MESSENGER. What say'st thou? Woman, is thy mind within
Clear, and not raving? Thou art found in sin
Most bloody wrought against the king's high head,
And laughest at the tale, and hast no dread?

MEDEA. I have words also that could answer well
Thy word. But take thine ease, good friend, and tell,

How died they? Hath it been a very foul
Death, prithee? That were comfort to my soul.

MESSENGER. When thy two children, hand in hand entwined,
Came with their father, and passed on to find
The new-made bridal rooms, oh, we were glad,
We thralls, who ever loved thee well, and had
Grief in thy grief. And straight there passed a word
From ear to ear, that thou and thy false lord
Had poured peace offering upon wrath foregone.
A right glad welcome gave we them, and one
Kissed the small hands, and one the shining hair:
Myself, for very joy, I followed where
The women's rooms are. There our mistress . . . she
Whom now we name so . . . thinking not to see
Thy little pair, with glad and eager brow
Sate waiting Jason. Then she saw, and slow
Shrouded her eyes, and backward turned again,
Sick that thy children should come near her. Then
Thy husband quick went forward, to entreat
The young maid's fitful wrath. "Thou wilt not meet
Love's coming with unkindness? Nay, refrain
Thy suddenness, and turn thy face again,
Holding as friends all that to me are dear,
Thine husband. And accept these robes they bear
As gifts: and beg thy father to unmake
His doom of exile on them—for my sake."
When once she saw the raiment, she could still
Her joy no more, but gave him all his will.
And almost ere the father and the two
Children were gone from out the room, she drew
The flowerèd garments forth, and sate her down
To her arraying: bound the golden crown
Through her long curls, and in a mirror fair
Arranged their separate clusters, smiling there
At the dead self that faced her. Then aside
She pushed her seat, and paced those chambers wide

Alone, her white foot poising delicately—
So passing joyful in those gifts was she!—
And many a time would pause, straight-limbed, and wheel
Her head to watch the long fold to her heel
Sweeping. And then came something strange. Her cheek
Seemed pale, and back with crooked steps and weak
Groping of arms she walked, and scarcely found
Her old seat, that she fell not to the ground.
Among the handmaids was a woman old
And gray, who deemed, I think, that Pan had hold
Upon her, or some spirit, and raised a keen
Awakening shout; till through her lips was seen
A white foam crawling, and her eyeballs back
Twisted, and all her face dead pale for lack
Of life: and while that old dame called, the cry
Turned strangely to its opposite, to die
Sobbing. Oh, swiftly then one woman flew
To seek her father's rooms, one for the new
Bridegroom, to tell the tale. And all the place
Was loud with hurrying feet.
So long a space
As a swift walker on a measured way
Would pace a furlong's course in, there she lay
Speechless, with veilèd lids. Then wide her eyes
She oped, and wildly, as she strove to rise,
Shrieked: for two diverse waves upon her rolled
Of stabbing death. The carcanet of gold
That gripped her brow was molten in a dire
And wondrous river of devouring fire.
And those fine robes, the gift thy children gave—
God's mercy!—everywhere did lap and lave
The delicate flesh; till up she sprang, and fled,
A fiery pillar, shaking locks and head
This way and that, seeking to cast the crown
Somewhere away. But like a thing nailed down
The burning gold held fast the anadem,
And through her locks, the more she scattered them,

Came fire the fiercer, till to earth she fell
A thing—save to her sire—scarce nameable,
And strove no more. That cheek of royal mien,
Where was it—or the place where eyes had been?
Only from crown and temples came faint blood
Shot through with fire. The very flesh, it stood
Out from the bones, as from a wounded pine
The gum starts, where those gnawing poisons fine
Bit in the dark—a ghastly sight! And touch
The dead we durst not. We had seen too much.
But that poor father, knowing not, had sped,
Swift to his daughter's room, and there the dead
Lay at his feet. He knelt, and groaning low,
Folded her in his arms, and kissed her: "Oh,
Unhappy child, what thing unnatural hath
So hideously undone thee? Or what wrath
Of gods, to make this old gray sepulcher
Childless of thee? Would God but lay me there
To die with thee, my daughter!" So he cried.
But after, when he stayed from tears, and tried
To uplift his old bent frame, lo, in the folds
Of those fine robes it held, as ivy holds
Strangling among young laurel boughs. Oh, then
A ghastly struggle came! Again, again,
Up on his knee he writhed; but that dead breast
Clung still to his: till, wild, like one possessed,
He dragged himself half free; and, lo, the live
Flesh parted; and he laid him down to strive
No more with death, but perish; for the deep
Had risen above his soul. And there they sleep,
At last, the old proud father and the bride,
Even as his tears had craved it, side by side.
For thee—Oh, no word more! Thyself will know
How best to baffle vengeance. . . . Long ago
I looked upon man's days, and found a gray
Shadow. And this thing more I surely say,
That those of all men who are counted wise,

Strong wits, devisers of great policies,
Do pay the bitterest toll. Since life began,
Hath there in God's eye stood one happy man?
Fair days roll on, and bear more gifts or less
Of fortune, but to no man happiness.

[*Exit Messenger.*]

CHORUS—*Some Women.* Wrath upon wrath, meseems, this day shall fall
From God on Jason! He hath earned it all.

CHORUS—*Other Women.* O miserable maiden, all my heart
Is torn for thee, so sudden to depart
From thy king's chambers and the light above
To darkness, all for sake of Jason's love!

MEDEA. Women, my mind is clear. I go to slay
My children with all speed, and then, away
From hence; not wait yet longer till they stand
Beneath another and an angrier hand
To die. Yea, howsoe'er I shield them, die
They must. And, seeing that they must, 't is I
Shall slay them, I their mother, touched of none
Beside. Oh, up, and get thine armor on,
My heart! Why longer tarry we to win
Our crown of dire inevitable sin?
Take up thy sword, O poor right hand of mine,
Thy sword: then onward to the thin-drawn line
Where life turns agony. Let there be naught
Of softness now: and keep thee from that thought,
"Born of thy flesh," "thine own belovèd." Now,
For one brief day, forget thy children: thou
Shalt weep hereafter. Though thou slay them, yet
Sweet were they. . . . I am sore unfortunate.

[*She goes into the house.*]

CHORUS—*Some Women.* O Earth, our mother; and thou
All-seer, arrowy crown
Of sunlight, manward now
Look down, oh, look down!

Look upon one accurst,
Ere yet in blood she twine
Red hands—blood that is thine!
O Sun, save her first!
She is thy daughter still,
Of thine own golden line;
Save her! Or shall man spill
The life divine?
Give peace, O Fire that diest not! Send thy spell
To stay her yet, to lift her afar, afar—
A torture-changèd spirit, a voice of Hell
Wrought of old wrongs and war!
CHORUS—*Others.* Alas for the mother's pain
Wasted! Alas the dear
Life that was born in vain!
Woman, what mak'st thou here,
Thou from beyond the Gate
Where dim Symplegades
Clash in the dark blue seas,
The shores where death doth wait?
Why hast thou taken on thee,
To make us desolate,
This anger of misery
And guilt of hate?
For fierce are the smitings back of blood once shed
Where love hath been: God's wrath upon them that kill,
And an anguished earth, and the wonder of the dead
Haunting as music still. . . .

[*A cry is heard within.*]

A WOMAN. Hark! Did ye hear? Heard ye the children's cry?

ANOTHER. O miserable woman! O abhorred!

A CHILD [*within*]. What shall I do? What is it? Keep me fast
From mother!

THE OTHER CHILD. I know nothing. Brother! Oh,
I think she means to kill us.

A Woman. Let me go!
I will—Help! Help!—and save them at the last.
A Child. Yes, in God's name! Help quickly ere we die!
The Other Child. She has almost caught me now. She has a sword.

[*Many of the women are now beating at the barred door to get in. Others are standing apart.*]

Women [*at the door*]. Thou stone, thou thing of iron! Wilt verily
Spill with thine hand that life, the vintage stored
Of thine own agony?
The Other Women. A mother slew her babes in days of yore,
One, only one, from dawn to eventide,
Ino, god-maddened, whom the Queen of Heaven
Set frenzied, flying to the dark: and she
Cast her for sorrow to the wide salt sea,
Forth from those rooms of murder unforgiven,
Wild-footed from a white crag of the shore,
And clasping still her children twain, she died.

O Love of Woman, charged with sorrow sore,
What hast thou wrought upon us? What beside
Resteth to tremble for?

[*Enter hurriedly* Jason *and Attendants.*]

Jason. Ye women by this doorway clustering
Speak, is the doer of the ghastly thing
Yet here, or fled? What hopeth she of flight?
Shall the deep yawn to shield her? Shall the height
Send wings, and hide her in the vaulted sky
To work red murder on her lords, and fly
Unrecompensed? But let her go! My care
Is but to save my children, not for her.
Let them she wronged requite her as they may.
I care not. 'T is my sons I must some way

Save, ere the kinsmen of the dead can win
From them the payment of their mother's sin.

LEADER. Unhappy man, indeed thou knowest not
What dark place thou art come to! Else, God wot,
Jason, no word like these could fall from thee.

JASON. What is it?—Ha! The woman would kill me?

LEADER. Thy sons are dead, slain by their mother's hand.

JASON. How? Not the children. . . . I scarce understand. . . .
O God, thou hast broken me!

LEADER. Think of those twain
As things once fair, that ne'er shall bloom again.

JASON. Where did she murder them? In that old room?

LEADER. Open, and thou shalt see thy children's doom.

JASON. Ho, thralls! Unloose me yonder bars! Make more
Of speed! Wrench out the jointing of the door.
And show my two-edged curse, the children dead,
The woman. . . . Oh, this sword upon her head. . . .

[*While the Attendants are still battering at the door,* MEDEA *appears on the roof, standing on a chariot of winged dragons, in which are the children's bodies.*]

MEDEA. What make ye at my gates? Why batter ye
With brazen bars, seeking the dead and me
Who slew them? Peace! . . . And thou, if aught of mine
Thou needest, speak, though never touch of thine
Shall scathe me more. Out of his firmament
My father's father, the high Sun, hath sent
This, that shall save me from mine enemies' rage.

JASON. Thou living hate! Thou wife in every age
Abhorrèd, blood-red mother, who didst kill
My sons, and make me as the dead: and still
Canst take the sunshine to thine eyes, and smell
The green earth, reeking from thy deed of hell;
I curse thee! Now, oh, now mine eyes can see,

That then were blinded, when from savagery
Of eastern chambers, from a cruel land,
To Greece and home I gathered in mine hand
Thee, thou incarnate curse: one that betrayed
Her home, her father, her . . . Oh, God hath laid
Thy sins on me!—I knew, I knew, there lay
A brother murdered on thy hearth that day
When thy first footstep fell on Argo's hull. . . .
Argo, my own, my swift and beautiful!
That was her first beginning. Then a wife
I made her in my house. She bore to life
Children: and now for love, for chambering
And men's arms, she hath murdered them! A thing
Not one of all the maids of Greece, not one,
Had dreamed of; whom I spurned, and for mine own
Chose thee, a bride of hate to me and death,
Tigress, not woman, beast of wilder breath
Than Scylla shrieking o'er the Tuscan sea.
Enough! No scorn of mine can reach to thee,
Such iron is o'er thine eyes. Out from my road,
Thou crime-begetter, blind with children's blood!
And let me weep alone the bitter tide
That sweepeth Jason's days, no gentle bride
To speak with more, no child to look upon
Whom once I reared . . . all, all forever gone!

Medea. An easy answer had I to this swell
Of speech, but Zeus our father knoweth well,
All I for thee have wrought, and thou for me.
So let it rest. This thing was not to be,
That thou shouldst live a merry life, my bed
Forgotten and my heart uncomforted,
Thou nor thy princess: nor the king that planned
Thy marriage drive Medea from his land,
And suffer not. Call me what thing thou please,
Tigress or Scylla from the Tuscan seas:
My claws have gripped thine heart, and all things shine.

Jason. Thou too hast grief. Thy pain is fierce as mine.

MEDEA. I love the pain, so thou shalt laugh no more.
JASON. Oh, what a womb of sin my children bore!
MEDEA. Sons, did ye perish for your father's shame?
JASON. How? It was not my hand that murdered them.
MEDEA. 'T was thy false wooings, 't was thy trampling pride.
JASON. Thou hast said it! For thy lust of love they died.
MEDEA. And love to women a slight thing should be?
JASON. To women pure!—All thy vile life to thee!
MEDEA. Think of thy torment. They are dead, they are dead!
JASON. No: quick, great God; quick curses round thy head!
MEDEA. The gods know who began this work of woe.
JASON. Thy heart and all its loathliness they know.
MEDEA. Loathe on. . . . But, oh, thy voice. It hurts me sore.
JASON. Aye, and thine me. Wouldst hear me then no more?
MEDEA. How? Show me but the way. 'T is this I crave.
JASON. Give me the dead to weep, and make their grave.
MEDEA. Never! Myself will lay them in a still
Green sepulcher, where Hera by the Hill
Hath precinct holy, that no angry men
May break their graves and cast them forth again
To evil. So I lay on all this shore
Of Corinth a high feast forevermore
And rite, to purge them yearly of the stain
Of this poor blood. And I, to Pallas' plain
I go, to dwell beside Pandion's son,
Ægeus.—For thee, behold, death draweth on,
Evil and lonely, like thine heart: the hands
Of thine old Argo, rotting where she stands,
Shall smite thine head in twain, and bitter be
To the last end thy memories of me.

[*She rises on the chariot and is slowly borne away.*]

JASON. May They that hear the weeping child
Blast thee, and They that walk in blood!
MEDEA. Thy broken vows, thy friends beguiled
Have shut for thee the ears of God.
JASON. Go, thou art wet with children's tears!
MEDEA. Go, thou, and lay thy bride to sleep.
JASON. Childless, I go, to weep and weep.
MEDEA. Not yet! Age cometh and long years.
JASON. My sons, mine own!
MEDEA. Not thine, but mine . . .
JASON. . . . Who slew them!
MEDEA. Yes: to torture thee.
JASON. Once let me kiss their lips, once twine
Mine arms and touch. . . . Ah, woe is me!
MEDEA. Wouldst love them and entreat? But now
They were as nothing.
JASON. At the last,
O God, to touch that tender brow!
MEDEA. Thy words upon the wind are cast.
JASON. Thou, Zeus, wilt hear me. All is said
For naught. I am but spurned away
And trampled by this tigress, red
With children's blood. Yet, come what may,
So far as thou has granted, yea,
So far as yet my strength may stand,
I weep upon these dead, and say
Their last farewell, and raise my hand

To all the demons of the air
In witness of these things; how she
Who slew them, will not suffer me
To gather up my babes, nor bear
To earth their bodies; whom, O stone
Of women, would I ne'er had known
Nor gotten, to be slain by thee!

[*He casts himself upon the earth.*]

CHORUS. Great treasure halls hath Zeus in heaven,
From whence to man strange dooms be given,
Past hope or fear.
And the end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man thought:
So hath it fallen here.

PHÆDRA

(PHÈDRE)

BY

JEAN RACINE

(1677)

Translated into English blank verse by ROBERT BRUCE BOSWELL

INTRODUCTION

Sophocles wrote, in *Œdipus the King,* a flawless tragedy of classical form and restraint; Euripides, in the *Medea,* a passionate romantic melodrama. The Phædra of Racine (1677), is a model of French or Pseudo-Classicism; it is a tragedy, romantic in spirit and theme, yet conforming rigidly to the pseudo-classical rules as formulated by Italian commentators upon Aristotle's *Poetics,* and subsequently refined and adopted by the French Academy.

The *Phædra,* like all French drama written in obedience to the literary precepts of the Academy, observes the three unities of action, time, and place. Instead of achieving Aristotle's ideal imitation of the possibilities of human nature, it strives for verisimilitude, or psychological realism, though the aristocratic decorum of French society did not permit an unrelieved realism such as we find in Hauptmann and Gorki. It portrays a classical story, a love crisis arising out of a struggle between the behests of love and honor, but it relies for its effect upon oratory and declamation rather than upon action. Instead of a rapid and complicated plot such as we find, for example, in *Romeo and Juliet,* the play is made up of prolonged rhetorical speeches in which the characters analyze at length their conflicting emotions.

Racine's treatment of this famous story is a curious mingling of Greek, Christian, and French points of view. He had before him as a model the *Hippolytus,* considered by many critics the greatest play of Euripides. In this play the central character is Hippolytus, who suffers for overweening pride in his chasity, or exclusive worship of Artemis (Diana), and for neglecting the service of the Aphrodite (Venus). Phædra is the means chosen by Aphrodite to punish the proud youth. Racine on the contrary makes Phædra the central tragic figure and complicates her struggle not only with jealousy, but with the remorse of a Christian conscience. In

her passion for Hippolytus, the victim of Venus, she is the pagan grand-daughter of the Sun, yet she has also the sinful conscience of a 17th Century Jansenist. Greek fate in Racine has become identified with original sin, and Phædra has become an example of an erring Christian wife fallen from grace.

The play also conforms to the restrictions of decorum demanded by the court of Louis XIV at Versailles; the characters speak the language of conventional refinement, and abide by the manners of polite society. They appeared in the performances arrayed in powdered wigs and decked out with the artifices of fashionable dress, which seem to us, for a Greek tragedy, tasteless and vulgar anachronisms. Yet we must remember that great plays can endure the costuming of any period.

Racine relies for the appeal of his tragedy partly upon moral effect, and partly upon pathos. Departing from Aristotle's conception of the hero, as a victim of a tragic flaw, rather than of wickedness, Racine turns his play into a tragedy of conscience, retribution, and compassion in which a woeful yet wicked woman suffers for her sinful lust. This kind of tragedy Aristotle placed in the second class as a kind of comedy. "It is ranked first only through the weakness of the audiences, the poets merely follow their public, writing as its wishes dictate". In other words, the public prefers a tragedy in which the good are rewarded and the wicked punished but in which, meanwhile, they may luxuriate in "the terrible and delicious fatality of passion".

Racine has spoiled the whole idea of Hippolytus as a worshipper of Diana by giving him a passion for Aricia. The poet ought, says Dryden, "to have preserved the character as it was delivered to us by antiquity, a young man, of the Amazonian strain, a jolly huntsman, and both by his profession and his early rising a mortal enemy to love. He has chosen to give him the turn of gallantry, sent him to travel from Athens to Paris, and transformed the Hippolytus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolyte."

By giving Phædra, however, the passion of jealousy Racine supplies a convincing motive for her false charges against Hippolytus. But she is inferior to the Phædra of Euripides

in delicacy because of the declamatory way in which she exhibits the bleeding pageant of her heart. The spectator is moved to compassion for a woman suffering the consequences of guilty passion; he does not experience the tragic pity and fear he feels in watching an Œdipus, an Antigone, or an Othello.

Racine's characters move as abstract essences of human qualities rather than as flesh and blood creatures displaying the action and reaction of mind and body; but they are, nevertheless, psychologically convincing in revealing the hidden motives of human nature, and the turmoil of human passions intense, yet restrained. The play stands forth among French tragedies as a model of technical perfection, and as a supreme example of what can be achieved in delineating passion within the severe restriction of the pseudo-classic rules. The French admire the play for its rationality, clarity, precision, and psychological insight, for its romantic emotion kept within the bounds of decorum. It is, perhaps, the highest level the French have attained in the art of tragedy.

References.

Nitze and Dargan, *History of French Literature* (Holt, New York, 1922); Irving Babbitt, *Introduction to Racine's Phèdre* (Heath, Boston, 1910); Chateaubriand, *Génie du christianisme*, 2e, livre III, ch. iii; J. Lemaître, *Jean Racine*, 1908; Duclaux, *The Life of Racine* (Harper, New York, 1926); Lytton Strachey "Racine" in *Books and Characters* (Harcourt, New York, 1922).

TEXT OF THE PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THESEUS, *Son of Ægeus and King of Athens*

PHÆDRA, *wife of Theseus and daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë*

HIPPOLYTUS, *son of Theseus and Antiope, Queen of the Amazons*

ARICIA, *Princess of the Blood Royal of Athens*

ŒNONE, *nurse of Phædra*

THERAMENES, *tutor of Hippolytus*

ISMENE, *bosom friend of Aricia*

PANOPE, *waiting-woman of Phædra*

Guards

The scene is laid at Trœzen, a town of the Peloponnesus

PHÆDRA

ACT I

[*Enter* HIPPOLYTUS, THERAMENES.]

HIPPOLYTUS. My mind is settled, dear Theramenes.
And I can stay not more in lovely Trœzen.
In doubt that racks my soul with mortal anguish,
I grow ashamed of such long idleness.
Six months and more my father has been gone,
And what may have befallen one so dear
I know not, nor what corner of the earth
Hides him.

THERAMENES. And where, prince, will you look for him?
Already, to content your just alarm,
Have I not cross'd the seas on either side
Of Corinth, ask'd if aught were known of Theseus
Where Acheron is lost among the Shades,
Visited Elis, doubled Tœnarus,
And sail'd into the sea that saw the fall
Of Icarus? Inspired with what new hope,
Under what favor'd skies think you to trace
His footsteps? Who knows if the king, your father,
Wishes the secret of his absence known?
Perchance, while we are trembling for his life,
The hero calmly plots some fresh intrigue,
And only waits till the deluded fair—

HIPPOLYTUS. Cease, dear Theramenes, respect the name
Of Theseus. Youthful errors have been left
Behind, and no unworthy obstacle
Detains him. Phædra long has fix'd a heart

Inconstant once, nor need she fear a rival.
In seeking him I shall but do my duty,
And leave a place I dare no longer see.

THERAMENES. Indeed! When, prince, did you begin to dread
These peaceful haunts, so dear to happy childhood
Where I have seen you oft prefer to stay,
Rather than meet the tumult and the pomp
Of Athens and the court? What danger shun you,
Or shall I say what grief?

HIPPOLYTUS. That happy time
Is gone, and all is changed, since to these shores
The gods sent Phædra.

THERAMENES. I perceive the cause
Of your distress. It is the queen whose sight
Offends you. With a step-dame's spite she schemed
Your exile soon as she set eyes on you.
But if her hatred is not wholly vanish'd,
It has at least taken a milder aspect.
Besides, what danger can a dying woman,
One too who longs for death, bring on your head?
Can Phædra, sick'ning of a dire disease
Of which she will not speak, weary of life
And of herself, form any plots against you?

HIPPOLYTUS. It is not her vain enmity I fear;
Another foe alarms Hippolytus.
I fly, it must be own'd from young Aricia,
The sole survivor of an impious race.

THERAMENES. What! You become her persecutor too!
The gentle sister of the cruel sons
Of Pallas shared not in their perfidy;
Why should you hate such charming innocence?

HIPPOLYTUS. I should not need to fly, if it were hatred.

THERAMENES. May I, then, learn the meaning of your flight?
Is this the proud Hippolytus I see,
Than whom there breathed no fiercer foe to love

And to that yoke which Theseus has so oft
Endured? And can it be that Venus, scorn'd
So long, will justify your sire at last?
Has she, then, setting you with other mortals,
Forced e'en Hippolytus to offer incense
Before her? Can you love?

HIPPOLYTUS. Friend, ask me not.
You, who have known my heart from infancy
And all its feelings of disdainful pride,
Spare me the shame of disavowing all
That I profess'd. Born of an Amazon,
The wildness that you wonder at I suck'd
With mother's milk. When come to riper age,
Reason approved what Nature had implanted.
Sincerely bound to me by zealous service,
You told me then the story of my sire,
And know how oft, attentive to your voice,
I kindled when I heard his noble acts,
As you described him bringing consolation
To mortals for the absence of Alcides,
The highways clear'd of monsters and of robbers,
Procrustes, Cercyon, Sciro, Sinnis slain,
The Epidaurian giant's bones dispersed,
Crete reeking with the blood of Minotaur.
But when you told me of less glorious deeds,
Troth plighted here and there and everywhere,
Young Helen stolen from her home at Sparta,
And Peribœa's tears in Salamis,
With many another trusting heart deceived
Whose very names have 'scaped his memory,
Forsaken Ariadne to the rocks
Complaining, last this Phædra, bound to him
By better ties,—you know with what regret
I heard and urged you to cut short the tale,
Happy had I been able to erase
From my remembrance that unworthy part
Of such a splendid record. I, in turn,

Am I too made the slave of love, and brought
To stoop so low? The more contemptible
That no renown is mine such as exalts
The name of Theseus, that no monsters quell'd
Have given me a right to share his weakness.
And if my pride of heart must needs be humbled,
Aricia should have been the last to tame it.
Was I beside myself to have forgotten
Eternal barriers of separation
Between us? By my father's stern command
Her brethren's blood must ne'er be reinforced
By sons of hers; he dreads a single shoot
From stock so guilty, and would fain with her
Bury their name, that, even to the tomb
Content to be his ward, for her no torch
Of Hymen may be lit. Shall I espouse
Her rights against my sire, rashly provoke
His wrath, and launch upon a mad career—

THERAMENES. The gods, dear prince, if once your hour is come,
Care little for the reasons that should guide us.
Wishing to shut your eyes, Theseus unseals them;
His hatred, stirring a rebellious flame
Within you, lends his enemy new charms.
And, after all, why should a guiltless passion
Alarm you? Dare you not essay its sweetness,
But follow rather a fastidious scruple?
Fear you to stray where Hercules has wander'd?
What heart so stout that Venus has not vanquish'd?
Where would you be yourself, so long her foe,
Had your own mother, constant in her scorn
Of love, ne'er glowed with tenderness for Theseus?
What boots it to affect a pride you feel not?
Confess it, all is changed; for some time past
You have been seldom seen with wild delight
Urging the rapid car along the strand,
Or, skillful in the art that Neptune taught,

Making th' unbroken steed obey the bit;
Less often have the woods return'd our shouts;
A secret burden on your spirits cast
Has dimm'd your eye. How can I doubt you love?
Vainly would you conceal the fatal wound.
Has not the fair Aricia touch'd your heart?

HIPPOLYTUS. Theramenes, I go to find my father.

THERAMENES. Will you not see the queen before you start,
My prince?

HIPPOLYTUS. That is my purpose: you can tell her.
Yes, I will see her; duty bids me do it.
But what new ill vexes her dear Œnone?

[*Enter* ŒNONE.]

ŒNONE. Alas, my lord, what grief was e'er like mine?
The queen has almost touch'd the gates of death.
Vainly close watch I keep by day and night,
E'en in my arms a secret malady
Slays her, and all her senses are disorder'd.
Weary yet restless from her couch she rises,
Pants for the outer air, but bids me see
That no one on her misery intrudes.
She comes.

HIPPOLYTUS. Enough. She shall not be disturb'd,
Nor be confronted with a face she hates.

[*Exeunt* HIPPOLYTUS *and* THERAMENES.]

[*Enter* PHÆDRA.]

PHÆDRA. We have gone far enough. Stay, dear Œnone;
Strength fails me, and I needs must rest awhile.
My eyes are dazzled with this glaring light
So long unseen, my trembling knees refuse
Support. Ah me!

ŒNONE. Would Heaven that our tears
Might bring relief!

PHÆDRA. Ah, how these cumbrous gauds,
These veils oppress me! What officious hand
Has tied these knots, and gather'd o'er my brow
These clustering coils? How all conspires to add
To my distress!

ŒNONE. What is one moment wish'd,
The next, is irksome. Did you not just now,
Sick of inaction, bid us deck you out,
And, with your former energy recall'd,
Desire to go abroad, and see the light
Of day once more? You see it, and would fain
Be hidden from the sunshine that you sought.

PHÆDRA. Thou glorious author of a hapless race,
Whose daughter 't was my mother's boast to be,
Who well may'st blush to see me in such plight,
For the last time I come to look on thee,
O Sun!

ŒNONE. What! Still are you in love with death?
Shall I ne'er see you, reconciled to life,
Forego these cruel accents of despair?

PHÆDRA. Would I were seated in the forest's shade!
When may I follow with delighted eye,
Thro' glorious dust flying in full career,
A chariot—

ŒNONE. Madam?

PHÆDRA. Have I lost my senses?
What said I? and where am I? Whither stray
Vain wishes? Ah! The gods have made me mad.
I blush, Œnone, and confusion covers
My face, for I have let you see too clearly
The shame and grief that, in my own despite,
O'erflow these eyes of mine.

ŒNONE. If you must blush,
Blush at a silence that inflames your woes.
Resisting all my care, deaf to my voice,
Will you have no compassion on yourself,
But let your life be ended in mid course?

What evil spell has drain'd its fountain dry?
Thrice have the shades of night obscured the heav'ns
Since sleep has enter'd thro' your eyes, and thrice
The dawn has chased the darkness thence, since food
Pass'd your wan lips, and you are faint and languid.
To what dread purpose is your heart inclined?
How dare you make attempts upon your life,
And so offend the gods who gave it you,
Prove false to Theseus and your marriage vows,
Ay, and betray your most unhappy children,
Bending their necks yourself beneath the yoke?
That day, be sure, which robs them of their mother,
Will give high hopes back to the stranger's son,
To that proud enemy of you and yours,
To whom an Amazon gave birth, I mean
Hippolytus—

PHÆDRA. Ye gods!

ŒNONE. Ah, this reproach
Moves you!

PHÆDRA. Unhappy woman, to what name
Gave your mouth utterance?

ŒNONE. Your wrath is just.
'T is well that that ill-omen'd name can rouse
Such rage. Then live. Let love and duty urge
Their claims. Live, suffer not this son of Scythia,
Crushing your children 'neath his odious sway,
To rule the noble offspring of the gods,
The purest blood of Greece. Make no delay;
Each moment threatens death; quickly restore
Your shatter'd strength, while yet the torch of life
Holds out, and can be fann'd into a flame.

PHÆDRA. Too long have I endured its guilt and shame!

ŒNONE. Why? What remorse gnaws at your heart? What crime
Can have disturb'd you thus? Your hands are not
Polluted with the blood of innocence?

PHÆDRA. Thanks be to Heav'n, my hands are free from stain.
Would that my soul were innocent as they!
ŒNONE. What awful project have you then conceived,
Whereat your conscience should be still alarm'd?
PHÆDRA. Have I not said enough? Spare me the rest.
I die to save myself a full confession.
ŒNONE. Die then, and keep a silence so inhuman;
But seek some other hand to close your eyes.
Tho' but a spark of life remains within you,
My soul shall go before you to the Shades.
A thousand roads are always open thither;
Pain'd at your want of confidence, I'll choose
The shortest. Cruel one, when has my faith
Deceived you? Think how in my arms you lay
New born. For you, my country and my children
I have forsaken. Do you thus repay
My faithful service?
PHÆDRA. What do you expect
From words so bitter? Were I to break silence,
Horror would freeze your blood.
ŒNONE. What can you say
To horrify me more than to behold
You die before my eyes?
PHÆDRA. When you shall know
My crime, my death will follow none the less,
But with the added stain of guilt.
ŒNONE. Dear madam,
By all the tears that I have shed for you,
By these weak knees I clasp, relieve my mind
From torturing doubt.
PHÆDRA. It is your wish. Then rise.
ŒNONE. I hear you. Speak.
PHÆDRA. Heav'ns! How shall I begin?
ŒNONE. Dismiss vain fears, you wound me with distrust.

PHÆDRA. O fatal animosity of Venus!
Into what wild distractions did she cast
My mother!
ŒNONE. Be they blotted from remembrance,
And for all time to come buried in silence.
PHÆDRA. My sister Ariadne, by what love
Were you betray'd to death, on lonely shores
Forsaken!
ŒNONE. Madam, what deep-seated pain
Prompts these reproaches against all your kin?
PHÆDRA. It is the will of Venus, and I perish,
Last, most unhappy of a family
Where all were wretched.
ŒNONE. Do you love?
PHÆDRA. I feel
All its mad fever.
ŒNONE. Ah, For whom?
PHÆDRA. Hear now
The crowning horror. Yes, I love—my lips
Tremble to say his name.
ŒNONE. Whom?
PHÆDRA. Know you him,
Son of the Amazon, whom I've oppress'd
So long?
ŒNONE. Hippolytus? Great gods!
PHÆDRA. 'T is you
Have named him.
ŒNONE. All my blood within my veins
Seems frozen. O despair! O cursèd race!
Ill-omen'd journey! Land of misery!
Why did we ever reach thy dangerous shores?
PHÆDRA. My wound is not so recent. Scarcely had I
Been bound to Theseus by the marriage yoke,
And happiness and peace seem'd well secured,
When Athens show'd me my proud enemy.
I look'd, alternately turn'd pale and blush'd
To see him, and my soul grew all distraught;

A mist obscured my vision, and my voice
Falter'd, my blood ran cold, then burn'd like fire;
Venus I felt in all my fever'd frame,
Whose fury had so many of my race
Pursued. With fervent vows I sought to shun
Her torments, built and deck'd for her a shrine,
And there, 'mid countless victims did I seek
The reason I had lost; but all for naught,
No remedy could cure the wounds of love!
In vain I offer'd incense on her altars;
When I invoked her name my heart adored
Hippolytus, before me constantly;
And when I made her altars smoke with victims,
'T was for a god whose name I dared not utter.
I fled his presence everywhere, but found him—
O crowning horror!—in his father's features.
Against myself, at last, I raised revolt,
And stirr'd my courage up to persecute
The enemy I loved. To banish him
I wore a step-dame's harsh and jealous carriage,
With ceaseless cries I clamor'd for his exile,
Till I had torn him from his father's arms.
I breathed once more, Œnone; in his absence
My days flow'd on less troubled than before,
And innocent. Submissive to my husband,
I hid my grief, and of our fatal marriage
Cherish'd the fruits. Vain caution! Cruel Fate!
Brought hither by my spouse himself, I saw
Again the enemy whom I had banish'd,
And the old wound too quickly bled afresh.
No longer is it love hid in my heart,
But Venus in her might seizing her prey.
I have conceived just terror for my crime;
I hate my life, and hold my love in horror.
Dying I wish'd to keep my fame unsullied,
And bury in the grave a guilty passion;
But I have been unable to withstand

Tears and entreaties, I have told you all;
Content, if only, as my end draws near,
You do not vex me with unjust reproaches,
Nor with vain efforts seek to snatch from death
The last faint lingering sparks of vital breath.

[*Enter* PANOPE.]

PANOPE. Fain would I hide from you tidings so sad,
But 't is my duty, madam, to reveal them.
The hand of death has seized your peerless husband,
And you are last to hear of this disaster.

ŒNONE. What say you, Panope?

PANOPE. The queen, deceived
By a vain trust in Heav'n, begs safe return
For Theseus, while Hippolytus his son
Learns of his death from vessels that are now
In port.

PHÆDRA. Ye gods!

PANOPE. Divided counsels sway
The choice of Athens; some would have the prince,
Your child, for master; others, disregarding
The laws, dare to support the stranger's son.
'T is even said that a presumptuous faction
Would crown Aricia and the house of Pallas.
I deem'd it right to warn you of this danger.
Hippolytus already is prepared
To start, and should he show himself at Athens,
'T is to be fear'd the fickle crowd will all
Follow his lead.

ŒNONE. Enough. The queen, who hears you,
By no means will neglect this timely warning.

[*Exit* PANOPE.]

Dear lady, I had almost ceased to urge
The wish that you should live, thinking to follow
My mistress to the tomb, from which my voice
Had fail'd to turn you; but this new misfortune
Alters the aspect of affairs, and prompts

Fresh measures. Madam, Theseus is no more,
You must supply his place. He leaves a son,
A slave, if you should die, but, if you live,
A king. On whom has he to lean but you?
No hand but yours will dry his tears. Then live
For him, or else the tears of innocence
Will move the gods, his ancestors, to wrath
Against his mother. Live, your guilt is gone,
No blame attaches to your passion now.
The king's decease has freed you from the bonds
That made the crime and horror of your love.
Hippolytus no longer need be dreaded,
Him you may see henceforth without reproach.
It may be, that, convinced of your aversion,
He means to head the rebels. Undeceive him,
Soften his callous heart, and bend his pride.
King of this fertile land, in Trœzen here
His portion lies; but as he knows, the laws
Give to your son the ramparts that Minerva
Built and protects. A common enemy
Threatens you both, unite then to oppose
Aricia.

PHÆDRA. To your counsel I consent.
Yes, I will live, if life can be restored,
If my affection for a son has pow'r
To rouse my sinking heart at such a dangerous hour.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

[*Enter* ARICIA *and* ISMENE.]

ARICIA. Hippolytus request to see me here!
Hippolytus desire to bid farewell!
Is't true, Ismene? Are you not deceived?

ISMENE. This is the first result of Theseus' death.

Prepare yourself to see from every side
Hearts turn toward you that were kept away
By Theseus. Mistress of her lot at last,
Aricia soon shall find all Greece fall low,
To do her homage.

ARICIA. 'T is not then, Ismene,
An idle tale? Am I no more a slave?
Have I no enemies?

ISMENE. The gods oppose
Your peace no longer, and the soul of Theseus
Is with your brothers.

ARICIA. Does the voice of fame
Tell how he died?

ISMENE. Rumors incredible
Are spread. Some say that, seizing a new bride,
The faithless husband by the waves was swallow'd.
Others affirm, and this report prevails,
That with Pirithoüs to the world below
He went, and saw the shores of dark Cocytus,
Showing himself alive to the pale ghosts;
But that he could not leave those gloomy realms,
Which whoso enters there abides forever.

ARICIA. Shall I believe that ere his destined hour
A mortal may descend into the gulf
Of Hades? What attraction could o'ercome
Its terrors?

ISMENE. He is dead, and you alone
Doubt it. The men of Athens mourn his loss.
Trœzen already hails Hippolytus
As king. And Phædra, fearing for her son,
Asks counsel of the friends who share her trouble,
Here in this palace.

ARICIA. Will Hippolytus,
Think you, prove kinder than his sire, make light
My chains, and pity my misfortunes?

ISMENE. Yes,
I think so, madam.

ARICIA. Ah, you know him not
Or you would never deem so hard a heart
Can pity feel, or me alone except
From the contempt in which he holds our sex.
Has he not long avoided every spot
Where we resort?

ISMENE. I know what tales are told
Of proud Hippolytus, but I have seen
Him near you, and have watch'd with curious eye
How one esteem'd so cold would bear himself.
Little did his behavior correspond
With what I look'd for; in his face confusion
Appear'd at your first glance, he could not turn
His languid eyes away, but gazed on you.
Love is a word that may offend his pride,
But what the tongue disowns, looks can betray.

ARICIA. How eagerly my heart hears what you say,
Tho' it may be delusion, dear Ismene!
Did it seem possible to you, who know me,
That I, sad sport of a relentless Fate,
Fed upon bitter tears by night and day,
Could ever taste the maddening draught of love?
The last frail offspring of a royal race,
Children of Earth, I only have survived
War's fury. Cut off in the flow'r of youth,
Mown by the sword, six brothers have I lost,
The hope of an illustrious house, whose blood
Earth drank with sorrow, near akin to his
Whom she herself produced. Since then, you know
How thro' all Greece no heart has been allow'd
To sigh for me, lest by a sister's flame
The brothers' ashes be perchance rekindled.
You know, besides, with what disdain I view'd
My conqueror's suspicions and precautions,
And how, oppos'd as I have ever been
To love, I often thank'd the king's injustice
Which happily confirm'd my inclination.

But then I never had beheld his son.
Not that, attracted merely by the eye,
I love him for his beauty and his grace,
Endowments which he owes to Nature's bounty,
Charms which he seems to know not or to scorn.
I love and prize in him riches more rare,
The virtues of his sire, without his faults.
I love, as I must own, that generous pride
Which ne'er has stoop'd beneath the amorous yoke.
Phædra reaps little glory from a lover
So lavish of his sighs; I am too proud
To share devotion with a thousand others,
Or enter where the door is always open.
But to make one who ne'er has stoop'd before
Bend his proud neck, to pierce a heart of stone,
To bind a captive whom his chains astonish,
Who vainly 'gainst a pleasing yoke rebels,—
That piques my ardor, and I long for that.
'T was easier to disarm the god of strength
Than this Hippolytus, for Hercules
Yielded so often to the eyes of beauty,
As to make triumph cheap. But, dear Ismene,
I take too little heed of opposition
Beyond my pow'r to quell, and you may hear me,
Humbled by sore defeat, upbraid the pride
I now admire. What! Can he love? and I
Have had the happiness to bend—

ISMENE. He comes.
Yourself shall hear him.

[*Enter* HIPPOLYTUS.]

HIPPOLYTUS. Lady, ere I go
My duty bids me tell you of your change
Of fortune. My worst fears are realized;
My sire is dead. Yes, his protracted absence
Was caused as I foreboded. Death alone,
Ending his toils, could keep him from the world

Conceal'd so long. The gods at last have doom'd
Alcides' friend, companion, and successor.
I think your hatred, tender to his virtues,
Can hear such terms of praise without resentment,
Knowing them due. One hope have I that soothes
My sorrow: I can free you from restraint.
Lo, I revoke the laws whose rigor moved
My pity; you are at your own disposal,
Both heart and hand; here, in my heritage,
In Trœzen, where my grandside Pittheus reign'd
Of yore and I am now acknowledged king,
I leave you free, free as myself,—and more.

ARICIA. Your kindness is too great, 't is overwhelming.
Such generosity, that pays disgrace
With honor, lends more force than you can think
To those harsh laws from which you would release me.

HIPPOLYTUS. Athens, uncertain how to fill the throne
Of Theseus, speaks of you, anon of me,
And then of Phædra's son.

ARICIA. Of me, my lord?

HIPPOLYTUS. I know myself excluded by strict law:
Greece turns to my reproach a foreign mother.
But if my brother were my only rival,
My rights prevail o'er his clearly enough
To make me careless of the law's caprice.
My forwardness is check'd by juster claims:
To you I yield my place, or, rather, own
That it is yours by right, and yours the scepter,
As handed down from Earth's great son, Erechtheus.
Adoption placed it in the hands of Ægeus:
Athens, by him protected and increased,
Welcomed a king so generous as my sire,
And left your hapless brothers in oblivion.
Now she invites you back within her walls;
Protracted strife has cost her groans enough,
Her fields are glutted with your kinsmen's blood
Fatt'ning the furrows out of which it sprung

At first. I rule this Trœzen; while the son
Of Phædra has in Crete a rich domain.
Athens is yours. I will do all I can
To join for you the votes divided now
Between us.

ARICIA. Stunn'd at all I hear, my lord,
I fear, I almost fear a dream deceives me.
Am I indeed awake? Can I believe
Such generosity? What god has put it
Into your heart? Well is the fame deserved
That you enjoy! That fame falls short of truth!
Would you for me prove traitor to yourself?
Was it not boon enough never to hate me,
So long to have abstain'd from harboring
The enmity—

HIPPOLYTUS. To hate you? I, to hate you?
However darkly my fierce pride was painted,
Do you suppose a monster gave me birth?
What savage temper, what unvenom'd hatred
Would not be mollified at sight of you?
Could I resist the soul-bewitching charm—

ARICIA. Why, what is this, sir?

HIPPOLYTUS. I have said too much
Not to say more. Prudence in vain resists
The violence of passion. I have broken
Silence at last, and I must tell you now
The secret that my heart can hold no longer.
You see before you an unhappy instance
Of hasty pride, a prince who claims compassion.
I, who, so long the enemy of Love,
Mock'd at his fetters and despised his captives,
Who, pitying poor mortals that were shipwreck'd,
In seeming safety view'd the storms from land,
Now find myself to the same fate exposed,
Toss'd to and fro upon a sea of troubles!
My boldness has been vanquish'd in a moment,
And humbled is the pride wherein I boasted.

For nearly six months past, ashamed, despairing,
Bearing where'er I go the shaft that rends
My heart, I struggle vainly to be free
From you and from myself; I shun you, present;
Absent, I find you near; I see your form
In the dark forest depths; the shades of night,
Nor less broad daylight, bring back to my view
The charms that I avoid; all things conspire
To make Hippolytus your slave. For fruit
Of all my bootless sighs, I fail to find
My former self. My bow and javelins
Please me no more, my chariot is forgotten,
With all the Sea God's lessons; and the woods
Echo my groans instead of joyous shouts
Urging my fiery steeds.
Hearing this tale
Of passion so uncouth, you blush perchance
At your own handiwork. With what wild words
I offer you my heart, strange captive held
By silken jess! But dearer in your eyes
Should be the offering, that this language comes
Strange to my lips; reject not vows express'd
So ill, which but for you had ne'er been form'd

[*Enter* THERAMENES.]

THERAMENES. Prince, the queen comes. I herald her approach.
'T is you she seeks.
HIPPOLYTUS. Me?
THERAMENES. What her thought may be
I know not. But I speak on her behalf.
She would converse with you ere you go hence.
HIPPOLYTUS. What shall I say to her? Can she expect—
ARICIA. You cannot, noble Prince, refuse to hear her,
Howe'er convinced she is your enemy,
Some shade of pity to her tears is due.
HIPPOLYTUS. Shall we part thus? and will you let me go,

Not knowing if my boldness has offended
The goddess I adore? Whether this heart
Left in your hands—

ARICIA. Go, Prince, pursue the schemes
Your generous soul dictates, make Athens own
My scepter. All the gifts you offer me
Will I accept, but this high throne of empire
Is not the one most precious in my sight.

[*Exeunt* ARICIA *and* ISMENE.]

HIPPOLYTUS. Friend, is all ready?
But the Queen approaches.
Go, see the vessel in fit trim to sail.
Haste, bid the crew aboard, and hoist the signal;
Then soon return, and so deliver me
From interview most irksome.

[*Exit* THERAMENES.]

[*Enter* PHÆDRA *and* ŒNONE.]

PHÆDRA [*to* ŒNONE]. There I see him!
My blood forgets to flow, my tongue to speak
What I am come to say.

ŒNONE. Think of your son,
How all his hopes depend on you.

PHÆDRA. I hear
You leave us, and in haste. I come to add
My tears to your distress, and for a son
Plead my alarm. No more has he a father,
And at no distant day my son must witness
My death. Already do a thousand foes
Threaten his youth. You only can defend him.
But in my secret heart remorse awakes,
And fear lest I have shut your ears against
His cries. I tremble lest your righteous anger
Visit on him ere long the hatred earn'd
By me, his mother.

HIPPOLYTUS. No such base resentment,
Madam, is mine.

PHÆDRA. I could not blame you, Prince,
If you should hate me. I have injured you:
So much you know, but could not read my heart.
T' incur your enmity has been mine aim:
The selfsame borders could not hold us both;
In public and in private I declared
Myself your foe, and found no peace till seas
Parted us from each other. I forbade
Your very name to be pronounced before me.
And yet if punishment should be proportion'd
To the offense, if only hatred draws
Your hatred, never woman merited
More pity, less deserved your enmity.

HIPPOLYTUS. A mother jealous of her children's rights
Seldom forgives the offspring of a wife
Who reign'd before her. Harassing suspicions
Are common sequels of a second marriage.
Of me would any other have been jealous
No less than you, perhaps more violent.

PHÆDRA. Ah, Prince, how Heav'n has from the general law
Made me exempt, be that same Heav'n my witness!
Far different is the trouble that devours me!

HIPPOLYTUS. This is no time for self-reproaches, madam.
It may be that your husband still beholds
The light, and Heav'n may grant him safe return,
In answer to our prayers. His guardian god
Is Neptune, ne'er by him invoked in vain.

PHÆDRA. He who has seen the mansions of the dead
Returns not thence. Since to those gloomy shores
Theseus is gone, 't is vain to hope that Heav'n
May send him back. Prince, there is no release
From the Acheron's greedy maw. And yet, methinks,
He lives, and breathes in you. I see him still
Before me, and to him I seem to speak;
My heart—
Oh! I am mad; do what I will,
I cannot hide my passion.

HIPPOLYTUS. Yes, I see
The strange effects of love. Theseus, tho' dead,
Seems present to your eyes, for in your soul
There burns a constant flame.
PHÆDRA. Ah, yes, for Theseus
I languish and I long, not as the Shades
Have seen him, of a thousand different forms
The fickle lover, and of Pluto's bride
The would-be ravisher, but faithful, proud
E'en to a slight disdain, with youthful charms
Attracting every heart, as gods are painted,
Or like yourself. He had your mien, your eyes,
Spoke and could blush like you, when to the isle
Of Crete, my childhood's home, he cross'd the waves,
Worthy to win the love of Minos' daughters.
What were you doing then? Why did he gather
The flow'r of Greece, and leave Hippolytus?
Oh, why were you too young to have embark'd
On board the ship that brought thy sire to Crete?
At your hands would the monster then have perish'd,
Despite the windings of his vast retreat.
To guide your doubtful steps within the maze
My sister would have arm'd you with the clue.
But no, therein would Phædra have forestall'd her,
Love would have first inspired me with the thought;
And I it would have been whose timely aid
Had taught you all the labyrinth's crooked ways.
What anxious care a life so dear had cost me!
No thread had satisfied your lover's fears:
I would myself have wish'd to lead the way,
And share the peril you were bound to face;
Phædra with you would have explored the maze,
With you emerged in safety, or have perish'd.
HIPPOLYTUS. Gods! What is this I hear? Have you forgotten
That Theseus is my father and your husband?

PHÆDRA. Why should you fancy I have lost remembrance
Thereof, and am regardless of mine honor?
HIPPOLYTUS. Forgive me, madam. With a blush I own
That I misconstrued words of innocence.
For very shame I cannot bear your sight
Longer. I go—
PHÆDRA. Ah! cruel Prince, too well
You understood me. I have said enough
To save you from mistake. I love. But think not
That at the moment when I love you most
I do not feel my guilt; no weak compliance
Has fed the poison that infects my brain.
The ill-starr'd object of celestial vengeance,
I am not so detestable to you
As to myself. The gods will bear me witness,
Who have within my veins kindled this fire,
The gods, who take a barbarous delight
In leading a poor mortal's heart astray.
Do you yourself recall to mind the past:
'T was not enough for me to fly, I chased you
Out of the country, wishing to appear
Inhuman, odious; to resist you better,
I sought to make you hate me. All in vain!
Hating me more I loved you none the less:
New charms were lent to you by your misfortunes.
I have been drown'd in tears, and scorch'd by fire;
Your own eyes might convince you of the truth,
If for one moment you could look at me.
What is 't I say? Think you this vile confession
That I have made is what I meant to utter?
Not daring to betray a son for whom
I trembled, 't was to beg you not to hate him
I came. Weak purpose of a heart too full
Of love for you to speak of aught besides!
Take your revenge, punish my odious passion;
Prove yourself worthy of your valiant sire,
And rid the world of an offensive monster!

Does Theseus' widow dare to love his son?
The frightful monster! Let her not escape you!
Here is my heart. This is the place to strike.
Already prompt to expiate its guilt,
I feel it leap impatiently to meet
Your arm. Strike home. Or, if it would disgrace you
To steep your hand in such polluted blood,
If that were punishment too mild to slake
Your hatred, lend me then your sword, if not
Your arm. Quick, giv't.

ŒNONE. What, madam, will you do?
Just gods! But some one comes. Go, fly from shame,
You cannot 'scape if seen by any thus.

[*Exeunt* PHÆDRA *and* ŒNONE.]

[*Enter* THERAMENES.]

THERAMENES. Is that the form of Phædra that I see
Hurried away? What mean these signs of sorrow?
Where is your sword? Why are you pale, confused?

HIPPOLYTUS. Friend, let us fly. I am, indeed, confounded
With horror and astonishment extreme.
Phædra—but no; gods, let this dreadful secret
Remain forever buried in oblivion.

THERAMENES. The ship is ready if you wish to sail.
But Athens has already giv'n her vote;
Their leaders have consulted all her tribes;
Your brother is elected, Phædra wins.

HIPPOLYTUS. Phædra?

THERAMENES. A herald, charged with a commission
From Athens, has arrived to place the reins
Of power in her hands. Her son is king.

HIPPOLYTUS. Ye gods, who know her, do ye thus reward
Her virtue?

THERAMENES. A faint rumor meanwhile whispers
That Theseus is not dead, but in Epirus
Has shown himself. But, after all my search,
I know too well—

HIPPOLYTUS. Let nothing be neglected.
This rumor must be traced back to its source.
If it be found unworthy of belief,
Let us set sail, and cost whate'er it may,
To hands deserving trust the scepter's sway. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III

[*Enter* PHÆDRA *and* ŒNONE.]

PHÆDRA. Ah! Let them take elsewhere the worthless honors
They bring me. Why so urgent I should see them?
What flattering balm can soothe my wounded heart?
Far rather hide me: I have said too much.
My madness has burst forth like streams in flood,
And I have utter'd what should ne'er have reach'd
His ear. Gods! How he heard me! How reluctant
To catch my meaning, dull and cold as marble,
And eager only for a quick retreat!
How oft his blushes made my shame the deeper!
Why did you turn me from the death I sought?
Ah! When his sword was pointed to my bosom,
Did he grow pale, or try to snatch it from me?
That I had touch'd it was enough for him
To render it forever horrible,
Leaving defilement on the hand that holds it.

ŒNONE. Thus brooding on your bitter disappointment,
You only fan a fire that must be stifled.
Would it not be more worthy of the blood
Of Minos to find peace in nobler cares,
And, in defiance of a wretch who flies
From what he hates, reign, mount the proffer'd throne?

PHÆDRA. I reign! Shall I the rod of empire sway,
When reason reigns no longer o'er myself?
When I have lost control of all my senses?

When 'neath a shameful yoke I scarce can breathe?
When I am dying?

ŒNONE. Fly.

PHÆDRA. I cannot leave him.

ŒNONE. Dare you not fly from him you dared to banish?

PHÆDRA. The time for that is past. He knows my frenzy.
I have o'erstepp'd the bounds of modesty,
And blazon'd forth my shame before his eyes.
Hope stole into my heart against my will.
Did you not rally my declining pow'rs?
Was it not you yourself recall'd my soul
When fluttering on my lips, and with your counsel,
Lent me fresh life, and told me I might love him?

ŒNONE. Blame me or blame me not for your misfortunes,
Of what was I incapable, to save you?
But if your indignation e'er was roused
By insult, can you pardon his contempt?
How cruelly his eyes, severely fix'd,
Survey'd you almost prostrate at his feet!
How hateful then appear'd his savage pride!
Why did not Phædra see him then as I
Beheld him?

PHÆDRA. This proud mood that you resent
May yield to time. The rudeness of the forests
Where he was bred, inured to rigorous laws,
Clings to him still; love is a word he ne'er
Had heard before. It may be his surprise
Stunn'd him, and too much vehemence was shown
In all I said.

ŒNONE. Remember that his mother
Was a barbarian.

PHÆDRA. Scythian tho' she was,
She learned to love.

ŒNONE. He has for all the sex
Hatred intense.

PHÆDRA. Then in his heart no rival
Shall ever reign. Your counsel comes too late.

Œnone, serve my madness, not my reason.
His heart is inaccessible to love:
Let us attack him where he has more feeling.
The charms of sovereignty appear'd to touch him;
He could not hide that he was drawn to Athens;
His vessels' prows were thither turn'd already,
All sail was set to scud before the breeze.
Go you on my behalf, to his ambition
Appeal, and let the prospect of the crown
Dazzle his eyes. The sacred diadem
Shall deck his brow, no higher honor mine
Than there to bind it. His shall be the pow'r
I cannot keep; and he shall teach my son
How to rule men. It may be he will deign
To be to him a father. Son and mother
He shall control. Try ev'ry means to move him;
Your words will find more favor than can mine.
Urge him with groans and tears; show Phædra dying,
Nor blush to use the voice of supplication.
In you is my last hope; I'll sanction all
You say; and on the issue hangs my fate.

[*Exit* Œnone.]

Phædra [*alone*]. Venus implacable, who seest me shamed
And sore confounded, have I not enough
Been humbled? How can cruelty be stretch'd
Farther? Thy shafts have all gone home, and thou
Hast triumph'd. Would'st thou win a new renown?
Attack an enemy more contumacious:
Hippolytus neglects thee, braves thy wrath,
Nor ever at thine altars bow'd the knee.
Thy name offends his proud, disdainful ears.
Our interests are alike: avenge thyself,
Force him to love—
But what is this? Œnone
Return'd already? He detests me then,
And will not hear you.

[*Enter* Œnone.]

ŒNONE. Madam, you must stifle
A fruitless love. Recall your former virtue:
The king who was thought dead will soon appear
Before your eyes, Theseus has just arrived,
Theseus is here. The people flock to see him
With eager haste. I went by your command
To find the prince, when with a thousand shouts
The air was rent—

PHÆDRA. My husband is alive,
That is enough, Œnone. I have own'd
A passion that dishonors him. He lives:
I ask to know no more.

ŒNONE. What?

PHÆDRA. I foretold it,
But you refused to hear. Your tears prevail'd
Over my just remorse. Dying this morn,
I had deserved compassion; your advice
I took, and die dishonor'd.

ŒNONE. Die?

PHÆDRA. Just Heav'ns!
What have I done to-day? My husband comes,
With him his son: and I shall see the witness
Of my adulterous flame watch with what face
I greet his father, while my heart is big
With sighs he scorn'd, and tears that could not move him
Moisten mine eyes. Think you that his respect
For Theseus will induce him to conceal
My madness, nor disgrace his sire and king?
Will he be able to keep back the horror
He has for me? His silence would be vain.
I know my treason, and I lack the boldness
Of those abandon'd women who can taste
Tranquillity in crime, and show a forehead
All unabash'd. I recognize my madness,
Recall it all. These vaulted roofs, methinks,
These walls can speak, and, ready to accuse me,
Wait but my husband's presence to reveal

My perfidy. Death only can remove
This weight of horror. Is it such misfortune
To cease to live? Death causes no alarm
To misery. I only fear the name
That I shall leave behind me. For my sons
How sad a heritage! The blood of Jove
Might justly swell the pride that boasts descent
From Heav'n, but heavy weighs a mother's guilt
Upon her offspring. Yes, I dread the scorn
That will be cast on them with too much truth,
For my disgrace. I tremble when I think
That, crush'd beneath that curse, they'll never dare
To raise their eyes.

ŒNONE. Doubt not I pity both;
Never was fear more just than yours. Why, then,
Expose them to this ignominy? Why
Will you accuse yourself? You thus destroy
The only hope that's left; it will be said
That Phædra, conscious of her perfidy,
Fled from her husband's sight. Hippolytus
Will be rejoiced that, dying, you should lend
His charge support. What can I answer him?
He'll find it easy to confute my tale,
And I shall hear him with an air of triumph
To every open ear repeat your shame.
Sooner than that may fire from heav'n consume me!
Deceive me not. Say, do you love him still?
How look you now on this contemptuous prince?

PHÆDRA. As on a monster frightful to mine eyes.

ŒNONE. Why yield him, then, an easy victory?
You fear him. Venture to accuse him first,
As guilty of the charge which he may bring
This day against you. Who can say 'tis false?
All tells against him: in your hands his sword
Happily left behind, your present trouble,
Your past distress, your warnings to his father,
His exile which your earnest pray'rs obtain'd.

PHÆDRA. What! Would you have me slander innocence?
ŒNONE. My zeal has need of naught from you but silence.
Like you I tremble, and am loath to do it;
More willingly I'd face a thousand deaths.
But since without this bitter remedy
I lose you, and to me your life outweighs
All else, I'll speak. Theseus, howe'er enraged,
Will do no worse than banish him again.
A father, when he punishes, remains
A father, and his ire is satisfied
With a light sentence. But if guiltless blood
Should flow, is not your honor of more moment?
A treasure far too precious to be risk'd?
You must submit, whatever it dictates;
For, when our reputation is at stake,
All must be sacrificed, conscience itself.
But someone comes. 'Tis Theseus.
PHÆDRA. And I see
Hippolytus, my ruin plainly written
In his stern eyes. Do what you will; I trust
My fate to you. I cannot help myself.

[*Enter* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, *and* THERAMENES.]

THESEUS. Fortune no longer fights against my wishes,
Madam, and to your arms restores—
PHÆDRA. Stay, Theseus!
Do not profane endearments that were once
So sweet, but which I am unworthy now
To taste. You have been wrong'd. Fortune has proved
Spiteful, nor in your absence spared your wife.
I am unfit to meet your fond caress,
How I may bear my shame my only care
Henceforth. [*Exeunt* PHÆDRA *and* ŒNONE.]
THESEUS. Strange welcome for your father, this!
What does it mean, my son?
HIPPOLYTUS. Phædra alone
Can solve this mystery. But if my wish

Can move you, let me never see her more;
Suffer Hippolytus to disappear
Forever from the home that holds your wife.

THESEUS. You, my son! Leave me?

HIPPOLYTUS. 'Twas not I who sought her:
'Twas you who led her footsteps to these shores.
At your departure you thought meet, my lord,
To trust Aricia and the queen to this
Trœzenian land, and I myself was charged
With their protection. But what cares henceforth
Need keep me here? My youth of idleness
Has shown its skill enough o'er paltry foes
That range the woods. May I not quit a life
Of such inglorious ease, and dip my spear
In nobler blood? Ere you had reach'd my age
More than one tyrant, monster more than one
Had felt the weight of your stout arm. Already,
Successful in attacking insolence,
You had removed all dangers that infested
Our coasts to east and west. The traveler fear'd
Outrage no longer. Hearing of your deeds,
Already Hercules relied on you,
And rested from his toils. While I, unknown
Son of so brave a sire, am far behind
Even my mother's footsteps. Let my courage
Have scope to act, and if some monster yet
Has 'scaped you, let me lay the glorious spoils
Down at your feet; or let the memory
Of death faced nobly keep my name alive,
And prove to all the world I was your son.

THESEUS. Why, what is this? What terror has possess'd
My family to make them fly before me?
If I return to find myself so fear'd,
So little welcome, why did Heav'n release me
From prison? My sole friend, misled by passion,
Was bent on robbing of his wife the tyrant
Who ruled Epirus. With regret I lent

The lover aid, but Fate had made us blind,
Myself as well as him. The tyrant seized me
Defenseless and unarm'd. Pirithoüs
I saw with tears cast forth to be devour'd
By savage beasts that lapp'd the blood of men.
Myself in gloomy caverns he enclosed,
Deep in the bowels of the earth, and nigh
To Pluto's realms. Six months I lay ere Heav'n
Had pity, and I 'scaped the watchful eyes
That guarded me. Then did I purge the world
Of a foul foe, and he himself has fed
His monsters. But when with expectant joy
To all that is most precious I draw near
Of what the gods have left me, when my soul
Looks for full satisfaction in a sight
So dear, my only welcome is a shudder,
Embrace rejected, and a hasty flight.
Inspiring, as I clearly do, such terror,
Would I were still a prisoner in Epirus!
Phædra complains that I have suffer'd outrage.
Who has betray'd me? Speak. Why was I not
Avenged? Has Greece, to whom mine arm so oft
Brought useful aid, shelter'd the criminal?
You make no answer. Is my son, mine own
Dear son, confederate with mine enemies?
I'll enter. This suspense is overwhelming.
I'll learn at once the culprit and the crime,
And Phædra must explain her troubled state. [*Exit.*]

HIPPOLYTUS. What do these words portend, which seem'd to freeze
My very blood? Will Phædra, in her frenzy,
Accuse herself, and seal her own destruction?
What will the king say? Gods! What fatal poison
Has love spread over all his house! Myself,
Full of a fire his hatred disapproves,
How changed he finds me from the son he knew!
With dark forebodings is my mind alarm'd,

But innocence has surely naught to fear.
Come, let us go, and in some other place
Consider how I best may move my sire
To tenderness, and tell him of a flame
Vex'd but not vanquish'd by a father's blame. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

[*Enter* THESEUS *and* ŒNONE.]

THESEUS. Ah! What is this I hear? Presumptuous traitor!
And would he have disgraced his father's honor?
With what relentless footsteps Fate pursues me!
Whither I go I know not, nor where now
I am. O kind affection ill repaid!
Audacious scheme! Abominable thought!
To reach the object of his foul desire
The wretch disdain'd not to use violence.
I know this sword that served him in his fury,
The sword I gave him for a nobler use.
Could not the sacred ties of blood restrain him?
And Phædra—was she loath to have him punish'd?
She held her tongue. Was that to spare the culprit?

ŒNONE. Nay, but to spare a most unhappy father.
O'erwhelmed with shame that her eyes should have kindled
So infamous a flame and prompted him
To crime so heinous, Phædra would have died.
I saw her raise her arm, and ran to save her.
To me alone you owe it that she lives;
And, in my pity both for her and you,
Have I against my will interpreted
Her tears.

THESEUS. The traitor! He might well turn pale.
'Twas fear that made him tremble when he saw me.
I was astonish'd that he show'd no pleasure;

His frigid greeting chill'd my tenderness.
But was this guilty passion that devours him
Declared already ere I banish'd him
From Athens?

ŒNONE. Sire, remember how the queen
Urged you. Illicit love caused all her hatred.

THESEUS. And then this fire broke out again at Trœzen?

ŒNONE. Sire, I have told you all. Too long the queen
Has been allow'd to bear her grief alone.
Let me now leave you and attend to her. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter* HIPPOLYTUS.]

THESEUS. Ah! There he is. Great gods! That noble mien
Might well deceive an eye less fond than mine!
Why should the sacred stamp of virtue gleam
Upon the forehead of an impious wretch!
Ought not the blackness of a traitor's heart
To show itself by sure and certain signs?

HIPPOLYTUS. My father, may I ask what fatal cloud
Has troubled your majestic countenance?
Dare you not trust this secret to your son?

THESEUS. Traitor, how dare you show yourself before me?
Monster, whom Heaven's bolts have spared too long!
Survivor of that robber crew whereof
I cleansed the earth. After your brutal lust
Scorn'd even to respect my marriage bed,
You venture—you, my hated foe—to come
Into my presence, here, where all is full
Of your foul infamy, instead of seeking
Some unknown land that never heard my name.
Fly, traitor, fly! Stay not to tempt the wrath
That I can scarce restrain, nor brave my hatred.
Disgrace enough have I incurr'd forever
In being father of so vile a son,
Without your death staining indelibly
The glorious record of my noble deeds.
Fly, and unless you wish quick punishment

To add you to the criminals cut off
By me, take heed this sun that lights us now
Ne'er see you more set foot upon this soil.
I tell you once again,—fly, haste, return not,
Rid all my realms of your atrocious presence.
To thee, to thee, great Neptune, I appeal;
If erst I clear'd thy shores of foul assassins,
Recall thy promise to reward those efforts,
Crown'd with success, by granting my first pray'r.
Confined for long in close captivity,
I have not yet call'd on thy pow'rful aid,
Sparing to use the valued privilege
Till at mine utmost need. The time is come,
I ask thee now. Avenge a wretched father!
I leave this traitor to thy wrath; in blood
Quench his outrageous fires, and by thy fury
Theseus will estimate thy favor tow'rds him.

HIPPOLYTUS. Phædra accuses me of lawless passion!
This crowning horror all my soul confounds;
Such unexpected blows, falling at once,
O'erwhelm me, choke my utterance, strike me dumb.

THESEUS. Traitor, you reckon'd that in timid silence
Phædra would bury your brutality.
You should not have abandon'd in your flight
The sword that in her hands help to condemn you
Or rather, to complete your perfidy,
You should have robb'd her both of speech and life.

HIPPOLYTUS. Justly indignant at a lie so black
I might be pardon'd if I told the truth;
But it concerns your honor to conceal it.
Approve the reverence that shuts my mouth;
And, without wishing to increase your woes,
Examine closely what my life has been.
Great crimes are never single, they are link'd
To former faults. He who has once transgress'd
May violate at last all that men hold
Most sacred; vice, like virtue, has degrees

Of progress; innocence was never seen
To sink at once into the lowest depths
Of guilt. No virtuous man can in a day
Turn traitor, murderer, an incestuous wretch.
The nursling of a chaste, heroic mother,
I have not proved unworthy of my birth.
Pittheus, whose wisdom is by all esteem'd,
Deign'd to instruct me when I left her hands.
It is no wish of mine to vaunt my merits,
But, if I may lay claim to any virtue,
I think beyond all else I have display'd
Abhorrence of those sins with which I'm charged.
For this Hippolytus is known in Greece,
So continent that he is deem'd austere.
All know my abstinence inflexible:
The daylight is not purer than my heart.
How, then, could I, burning with fire profane—

THESEUS. Yes, dastard, 'tis that very pride condemns you.
I see the odious reason of your coldness:
Phædra alone bewitch'd your shameless eyes;
Your soul, to others' charms indifferent,
Disdain'd the blameless fires of lawful love.

HIPPOLYTUS. No, father, I have hidden it too long,
This heart has not disdain'd a sacred flame.
Here at your feet I own my real offense:
I love, and love in truth where you forbid me;
Bound to Aricia by my heart's devotion,
The child of Pallas has subdued your son.
A rebel to your laws, her I adore,
And breathe forth ardent sighs for her alone.

THESEUS. You love her? Heav'ns!
But no, I see the trick.
You feign a crime to justify yourself.

HIPPOLYTUS. Sir, I have shunn'd her for six months, and still
Love her. To you yourself I came to tell it,
Trembling the while. Can nothing clear your mind

Of your mistake? What oath can reassure you?
By heav'n and earth and all the pow'rs of nature—
THESEUS. The wicked never shrink from perjury.
Cease, cease, and spare me irksome protestations,
If your false virtue has no other aid.
HIPPOLYTUS. Tho' it to you seem false and insincere,
Phædra has secret cause to know it true.
THESEUS. Ah, how your shamelessness excites my wrath!
HIPPOLYTUS. What is my term and place of banishment?
THESEUS. Were you beyond the Pillars of Alcides,
Your perjured presence were too near me yet.
HIPPOLYTUS. What friends will pity me, when you forsake
And think me guilty of a crime so vile?
THESEUS. Go, look you out for friends who hold in honor
Adultery and clap their hands at incest,
Low, lawless traitors, steep'd in infamy,
The fit protectors of a knave like you.
HIPPOLYTUS. Are incest and adultery the words
You cast at me? I hold my tongue. Yet think
What mother Phædra had; too well you know
Her blood, not mine, is tainted with those horrors.
THESEUS. What! Does your rage before my eyes lose all
Restraint? For the last time—out of my sight!
Hence, traitor! Wait not till a father's wrath
Force thee away 'mid general execration.

[*Exit* HIPPOLYTUS.]

THESEUS. [*alone*]. Wretch! Thou must meet inevitable ruin.
Neptune has sworn by Styx—to gods themselves
A dreadful oath—and he will execute
His promise. Thou canst not escape his vengeance.
I loved thee; and, in spite of thine offense,
My heart is troubled by anticipation
For thee. But thou hast earn'd thy doom too well.
Had father ever greater cause for rage?

Just gods, who see the grief that overwhelms me,
Why was I cursed with such a wicked son?

[*Enter* PHÆDRA.]

PHÆDRA. My lord, I come to you, fill'd with just dread.
Your voice raised high in anger reach'd mine ears,
And much I fear that deeds have follow'd threats.
Oh, if there yet is time, spare your own offspring,
Respect your race and blood, I do beseech you.
Let me not hear that blood cry from the ground;
Save me the horror and perpetual pain
Of having caused his father's hand to shed it.

THESEUS. No, madam, from that stain my hand is free,
But, for all that, the wretch has not escaped me.
The hand of an Immortal now is charged
With his destruction. 'Tis a debt that Neptune
Owes me, and you shall be avenged.

PHÆDRA. A debt
Owed you? Pray'rs made in anger—

THESEUS. Never fear
That they will fail. Rather join yours to mine.
In all their blackness paint for me his crimes,
And fan my tardy passion to white heat.
But yet you know not all his infamy;
His rage against you overflows in slanders;
Your mouth, he says, is full of all deceit,
He says Aricia has his heart and soul,
That her alone he loves.

PHÆDRA. Aricia?

THESEUS. Aye,
He said it to my face: an idle pretext!
A trick that gulls me not! Let us hope Neptune
Will do him speedy justice. To his altars
I go, to urge performance of his oaths. [*Exit.*]

PHÆDRA [*alone*]. Ah, he is gone! What tidings struck mine ears?
What fire, half smother'd, in my heart revives?

What fatal stroke falls like a thunderbolt?
Stung by remorse that would not let me rest,
I tore myself out of Œnone's arms,
And flew to help Hippolytus with all
My soul and strength. Who knows if that repentance
Might not have moved me to accuse myself?
And, if my voice had not been choked with shame,
Perhaps I had confess'd the frightful truth.
Hippolytus can feel, but not for me!
Aricia has his heart, his plighted troth.
Ye gods, when, deaf to all my sighs and tears,
He arm'd his eye with scorn, his brow with threats,
I deem'd his heart, impregnable to love,
Was fortified 'gainst all my sex alike.
And yet another has prevail'd to tame
His pride, another has secured his favor.
Perhaps he has a heart easily melted;
I am the only one he cannot bear!
And shall I charge myself with his defense?

[*Enter* Œnone.]

Phædra. Know you, dear nurse, what I have learn'd just now?

Œnone. No; but I come in truth with trembling limbs.
I dreaded with what purpose you went forth.
The fear of fatal madness made me pale.

Phædra. Who would have thought it, nurse? I had a rival.

Œnone. A rival?

Phædra. Yes, he loves. I cannot doubt it.
This wild untamable Hippolytus,
Who scorn'd to be admired, whom lovers' sighs
Wearied, this tiger, whom I fear'd to rouse,
Fawns on a hand that has subdued his pride:
Aricia has found entrance to his heart.

Œnone. Aricia?

Phædra. Ah! anguish as yet untried!
For what new tortures am I still reserved?

All I have undergone, transports of passion,
Longings and fears, the horrors of remorse,
The shame of being spurn'd with contumely,
Were feeble foretastes of my present torments.
They love each other! By what secret charm
Have they deceived me? Where, and when, and how
Met they? You knew it all. Why was I cozen'd?
You never told me of those stolen hours
Of amorous converse. Have they oft been seen
Talking together? Did they seek the shades
Of thickest woods? Alas! full freedom had they
To see each other. Heav'n approved their sighs;
They loved without the consciousness of guilt;
And every morning's sun for them shone clear,
While I, an outcast from the face of Nature,
Shunn'd the bright day, and sought to hide myself.
Death was the only god whose aid I dared
To ask: I waited for the grave's release.
Water'd with tears, nourish'd with gall, my woe
Was all too closely watch'd; I did not dare
To weep without restraint. In mortal dread
Tasting this dangerous solace, I disguised
My terror 'neath a tranquil countenance,
And oft had I to check my tears, and smile.

ŒNONE. What fruit will they enjoy of their vain love?
They will not see each other more.

PHÆDRA. That love
Will last forever. Even while I speak,
Ah, fatal thought, they laugh to scorn the madness
Of my distracted heart. In spite of exile
That soon must part them, with a thousand oaths
They seal yet closer union. Can I suffer
A happiness, Œnone, which insults me?
I crave your pity. She must be destroy'd.
My husband's wrath against a hateful stock
Shall be revived, nor must the punishment
Be light: the sister's guilt passes the brothers'.

I will entreat him in my jealous rage.
What am I saying? Have I lost my senses?
Is Phædra jealous, and will she implore
Theseus for help? My husband lives, and yet
I burn. For whom? Whose heart is this I claim
As mine? At every word I say, my hair
Stands up with horror. Guilt henceforth has pass'd
All bounds. Hypocrisy and incest breathe
At once thro' all. My murderous hands are ready
To spill the blood of guileless innocence.
Do I yet live, wretch that I am, and dare
To face this holy Sun from whom I spring?
My father's sire was king of all the gods;
My ancestors fill all the universe.
Where can I hide? In the dark realms of Pluto?
But there my father holds the fatal urn;
His hand awards th' irrevocable doom:
Minos is judge of all the ghosts in hell.
Ah! how his awful shade will start and shudder
When he shall see his daughter brought before him,
Forced to confess sins of such varied dye,
Crimes it may be unknown to hell itself!
What wilt thou say, my father, at a sight
So dire? I think I see thee drop the urn,
And, seeking some unheard-of punishment,
Thyself become my executioner.
Spare me! A cruel goddess has destroy'd
Thy race; and in my madness recognize
Her wrath. Alas! My aching heart has reap'd
No fruit of pleasure from the frightful crime
The shame of which pursues me to the grave,
And ends in torment life-long misery.

ŒNONE. Ah, madam, pray dismiss a groundless dread:
Look less severely on a venial error.
You love. We cannot conquer destiny.
You were drawn on as by a fatal charm.
Is that a marvel without precedent

Among us? Has love triumph'd over you,
And o'er none else? Weakness is natural
To man. A mortal, to a mortal's lot
Submit. You chafe against a yoke that others
Have long since borne. The dwellers in Olympus,
The gods themselves, who terrify with threats
The sins of men, have burn'd with lawless fires.

PHÆDRA. What words are these I hear? What counsel this
You dare to give me? Will you to the end
Pour poison in mine ears? You have destroy'd me.
You brought me back when I should else have quitted
The light of day, made me forget my duty
And see Hippolytus, till then avoided.
What hast thou done? Why did your wicked mouth
With blackest lies slander his blameless life?
Perhaps you've slain him, and the impious pray'r
Of an unfeeling father has been answer'd.
No, not another word! Go, hateful monster;
Away, and leave me to my piteous fate.
May Heav'n with justice pay you your deserts!
And may your punishment forever be
A terror to all those who would, like you,
Nourish with artful wiles the weaknesses
Of princes, push them to the brink of ruin
To which their heart inclines, and smooth the path
Of guilt. Such flatterers doth the wrath of Heav'n
Bestow on kings as its most fatal gift. [*Exit.*]

ŒNONE [*alone*]. O gods! to serve her what have I not done?
This is the due reward that I have won. [*Exit.*]

ACT V

[*Enter* HIPPOLYTUS *and* ARICIA.]

ARICIA. Can you keep silent in this mortal peril?
Your father loves you. Will you leave him thus

Deceived? If in your cruel heart you scorn
My tears, content to see me nevermore,
Go, part from poor Aricia; but at least,
Going, secure the safety of your life.
Defend your honor from a shameful stain.
And force your father to recall his pray'rs.
There yet is time. Why out of mere caprice
Leave the field free to Phædra's calumnies?
Let Theseus know the truth.

HIPPOLYTUS. Could I say more,
Without exposing him to dire disgrace?
How should I venture, by revealing all,
To make a father's brow grow red with shame?
The odious mystery to you alone
Is known. My heart has been outpour'd to none
Save you and Heav'n. I could not hide from you
(Judge if I love you) all I fain would hide
E'en from myself. But think under what seal
I spoke. Forget my words, if that may be;
And never let so pure a mouth disclose
This dreadful secret. Let us trust to Heav'n
My vindication, for the gods are just;
For their own honor will they clear the guiltless;
Sooner or later punish'd for her crime,
Phædra will not escape the shame she merits.
I ask no other favor than your silence;
In all besides I give my wrath free scope.
Make your escape from this captivity,
Be bold to bear me company in flight;
Linger not here on this accursèd soil,
Where virtue breathes a pestilential air.
To cover your departure take advantage
Of this confusion, caused by my disgrace.
The means of flight are ready, be assured;
You have as yet no other guards than mine.
Pow'rful defenders will maintain our quarrel;
Argos spreads open arms, and Sparta calls us.

Let us appeal for justice to our friends,
Nor suffer Phædra, in a common ruin
Joining us both, to hunt us from the throne,
And aggrandize her son by robbing us.
Embrace this happy opportunity:
What fear restrains? You seem to hesitate.
Your interest alone prompts me to urge
Boldness. When I am all on fire, how comes it
That you are ice? Fear you to follow then
A banish'd man?

ARICIA. Ah, dear to me would be
Such exile! With what joy, my fate to yours
United, could I live, by all the world
Forgotten! But not yet has that sweet tie
Bound us together. How then can I steal
Away with you? I know the strictest honor
Forbids me not out of your father's hands
To free myself; this is no parent's home,
And flight is lawful when one flies from tyrants.
But you, sir, love me; and my virtue shrinks—

HIPPOLYTUS. No, no, your reputation is to me
As dear as to yourself. A nobler purpose
Brings me to you. Fly from your foes, and follow
A husband. Heav'n, that sends us these misfortunes,
Sets free from human instruments the pledge
Between us. Torches do not always light
The face of Hymen.
At the gates of Trœzen,
'Mid ancient tombs where princes of my race
Lie buried, stands a temple ne'er approach'd
By perjurers, where mortals dare not make
False oaths, for instant punishment befalls
The guilty. Falsehood knows no stronger check
Than what is present there—the fear of death
That cannot be avoided. Thither then
We'll go, if you consent, and swear to love
Forever, take the guardian god to witness

Our solmen vows, and his paternal care
Entreat. I will invoke the name of all
The holiest Pow'rs; chaste Dian, and the Queen
Of Heav'n, yea all the gods who know my heart
Will guarantee my sacred promises.

ARICIA. The king draws near. Depart—make no delay.
To mask my flight, I linger yet one moment.
Go you; and leave with me some trusty guide,
To lead my timid footsteps to your side. [*Exit* HIPPOLYTUS.]

[*Enter* THESEUS *and* ISMENE.]

THESEUS. Ye gods, throw light upon my troubled mind,
Show me the truth which I am seeking here.

ARICIA [*aside to* ISMENE]. Get ready, dear Ismene, for our flight. [*Exit* ISMENE.]

THESEUS. Your color comes and goes, you seem confused,
Madam! What business had my son with you?

ARICIA. Sire, he was bidding me farewell forever.

THESEUS. Your eyes, it seems, can tame that stubborn pride;
And the first sighs he breathes are paid to you.

ARICIA. I can't deny the truth; he has not, sire,
Inherited your hatred and injustice;
He did not treat me like a criminal.

THESEUS. That is to say, he swore eternal love.
Do not rely on that inconstant heart;
To others has he sworn as much before.

ARICIA. He, sire?

THESEUS. You ought to check his roving taste
How could you bear a partnership so vile?

ARICIA. And how can you endure that vilest slanders
Should make a life so pure as black as pitch?
Have you so little knowledge of his heart?
Do you so ill distinguish between guilt
And innocence? What mist before your eyes
Blinds them to virtue so conspicuous?
Ah! 'tis too much to let false tongues defame him.

Repent; call back your murderous wishes, sire;
Fear, fear lest Heav'n in its severity
Hate you enough to hear and grant your pray'rs.
Oft in their wrath the gods accept our victims,
And oftentimes chastise us with their gifts.

THESEUS. No, vainly would you cover up his guilt.
Your love is blind to his depravity.
But I have witness irreproachable:
Tears have I seen, true tears, that may be trusted.

ARICIA. Take heed, my lord. Your hands invincible
Have rid the world of monsters numberless;
But all are not destroy'd, one you have left
Alive—Your son forbids me to say more;
Knowing with what respect he still regards you,
I should too much distress him if I dared
Complete my sentence. I will imitate
His reverence, and to keep silence, leave you. [*Exit.*]

THESEUS [*alone*]. What is there in her mind? What meaning lurks
In speech begun but to be broken short?
Would both deceive me with a vain pretense?
Have they conspired to put me to the torture?
And yet, despite my stern severity,
What plaintive voice cries deep within my heart?
A secret pity troubles and alarms me.
Œnone shall be questioned once again,
I must have clearer light upon this crime.
Guards, bid Œnone come, and come alone.

[*Enter* PANOPE.]

PANOPE. I know not what the queen intends to do,
But from her agitation dread the worst.
Fatal despair is painted on her features;
Death's pallor is already in her face.
Œnone, shamed and driven from her sight,
Has cast herself into the ocean depths.

None knows what prompted her to deed so rash;
And now the waves hide her from us forever.

THESEUS. What say you?

PANOPE. Her sad fate seems to have added
Fresh trouble to the queen's tempestuous soul.
Sometimes, to soothe her secret pain, she clasps
Her children close, and bathes them with her tears;
Then suddenly, the mother's love forgotten,
She thrusts them from her with a look of horror.
She wanders to and fro with doubtful steps;
Her vacant eye no longer knows us. Thrice
She wrote, and thrice did she, changing her mind,
Destroy the letter ere 'twas well begun.
Vouchsafe to see her, sire: vouchsafe to help her. [*Exit.*]

THESEUS. Heav'ns! Is Œnone dead, and Phædra bent
On dying too? Oh, call me back my son!
Let him defend himself, and I am ready
To hear him. Be not hasty to bestow
Thy fatal bounty, Neptune; let my pray'rs
Rather remain ever unheard. Too soon
I lifted cruel hands, believing lips
That may have lied! Ah! What despair may follow!

[*Enter* THERAMENES.]

THESEUS. Theramenes, is't thou? Where is my son?
I gave him to thy charge from tenderest childhood.
But whence these tears that overflow thine eyes?
How is it with my son?

THERAMENES. Concern too late!
Affection vain! Hippolytus is dead.

THESEUS. Gods!

THERAMENES. I have seen the flow'r of all mankind
Cut off, and I am bold to say that none
Deserved it less.

THESEUS. What! My son dead! When I
Was stretching out my arms to him, has Heav'n
Hasten'd his end? What was this sudden stroke?

THERAMENES. Scarce had we pass'd out of the gates of Trœzen,
He silent in his chariot, and his guards,
Downcast and silent too, around him ranged;
To the Mycenian road he turn'd his steeds,
Then, lost in thought, allow'd the reins to lie
Loose on their backs. His noble chargers, erst
So full of ardor to obey his voice,
With head depress'd and melancholy eye
Seem'd now to mark his sadness and to share it.
A frightful cry, that issues from the deep,
With sudden discord rends the troubled air;
And from the bosom of the earth a groan
Is heard in answer to that voice of terror.
Our blood is frozen at our very hearts;
With bristling manes the list'ning steeds stand still
Meanwhile upon the watery plain there rises
A mountain billow with mighty crest
Of foam, that shoreward rolls, and, as it breaks,
Before our eyes vomits a furious monster.
With formidable horns its brow is arm'd,
And all its body clothed with yellow scales,
In front a savage bull, behind a dragon
Turning and twisting in impatient rage.
Its long continued bellowings make the shore
Tremble; the sky seems horror-struck to see it;
The earth with terror quakes; its poisonous breath
Infects the air. The wave that brought it ebbs
In fear. All fly, forgetful of the courage
That cannot aid, and in a neighboring temple
Take refuge—all save bold Hippolytus
A hero's worthy son, he stays his steeds,
Seizes his darts, and, rushing forward, hurls
A missile with sure aim that wounds the monster
Deep in the flank. With rage and pain it springs
E'en to the horses' feet, and, roaring, falls,
Writhes in the dust, and shows a fiery throat

That covers them with flames, and blood, and smoke.
Fear lends them wings; deaf to his voice for once,
And heedless of the curb, they onward fly.
Their master wastes his strength in efforts vain;
With foam and blood each courser's bit is red.
Some say a god, amid this wild disorder,
Is seen with goads pricking their dusty flanks.
O'er jaggèd rocks they rush urged on by terror;
Crash! goes the axle-tree. Th' intrepid youth
Sees his car broken up, flying to pieces;
He falls himself entangled in the reins.
Pardon my grief. That cruel spectacle
Will be for me a source of endless tears.
I saw thy hapless son, I saw him, sire,
Dragg'd by the horses that his hands had fed,
Pow'rless to check their fierce career, his voice
But adding to their fright, his body soon
One mass of wounds. Our cries of anguish fill
The plain. At last they slacken their swift pace,
Then stop, not far from those old tombs that mark
Where lie the ashes of his royal sires.
Panting I thither run, and after me
His guard, along the track stain'd with fresh blood
That reddens all the rocks; caught in the briers
Locks of his hair hang dripping, gory spoils!
I come, I call him. Stretching forth his hand,
He opes his dying eyes, soon closed again.
"The gods have robb'd me of a guiltless life,"
I hear him say: "Take care of sad Aricia
When I am dead. Dear friend, if e'er my father
Mourn, undeceived, his son's unhappy fate
Falsely accused; to give my spirit peace,
Tell him to treat his captive tenderly,
And to restore—" With that the hero's breath
Fails, and a mangled corpse lies in my arms,
A piteous object, trophy of the wrath
Of Heav'n—so changed, his father would not know him.

THESEUS. Alas, my son! Dear hope forever lost!
The ruthless gods have served me but too well.
For what a life of anguish and remorse
Am I reserved!

THERAMENES. Aricia at that instant,
Flying from you, comes timidly, to take him
For husband, there, in presence of the gods.
Thus drawing nigh, she sees the grass all red
And reeking, sees (sad sight for lover's eye!)
Hippolytus stretch'd there, pale and disfigured.
But, for a time doubtful of her misfortune,
Unrecognized the hero she adores,
She looks, and asks— "Where is Hippolytus?"
Only too sure at last that he lies there
Before her, with sad eyes that silently
Reproach the gods, she shudders, groans, and falls,
Swooning and all but lifeless, at his feet.
Ismene, all in tears, kneels down beside her,
And calls her back to life—life that is naught
But sense of pain. And I, to whom this light
Is darkness now, come to discharge the duty
The hero has imposed on me, to tell thee
His last request—a melancholy task.
But hither comes his mortal enemy.

[*Enter* PHÆDRA, PANOPE, *and* GUARDS.]

THESEUS. Madam, you've triumph'd, and my son is kill'd!
Ah, but what room have I for fear! How justly
Suspicion racks me that in blaming him
I err'd! But he is dead; accept your victim;
Rightly or wrongly slain, let your heart leap
For joy. My eyes shall be forever blind
Since you accuse him, I'll believe him guilty.
His death affords me cause enough for tears,
Without a foolish search for further light
Which, pow'rless to restore him to my grief,
Might only serve to make me more unhappy.

Far from this shore and far from you I'll fly,
For here the image of my mangled son
Would haunt my memory and drive me mad.
From the whole world I fain would banish me,
For all the world seems to rise up in judgment
Against me; and my very glory weights
My punishment; for, were my name less known,
'T were easier to hide me. All the favors
The gods have granted me I mourn and hate,
Nor will I importune them with vain pray'rs
Henceforth forever. Give me what they may,
What they have taken will all else outweigh.

PHÆDRA. Theseus, I cannot hear you and keep silence:
I must repair the wrong that he has suffer'd—
Your son was innocent.

THESEUS. Unhappy father!
And it was on your word that I condemn'd him!
Think you such cruelty can be excused—

PHÆDRA. Moments to me are precious; hear me, Theseus.
'T was I who cast an eye of lawless passion
On chaste and dutiful Hippolytus.
Heav'n in my bosom kindled baleful fire,
And vile Œnone's cunning did the rest.
She fear'd Hippolytus, knowing my madness,
Would make that passion known which he regarded
With horror; so advantage of my weakness
She took, and hasten'd to accuse him first.
For that she has been punish'd, tho' too mildly;
Seeking to shun my wrath she cast herself
Beneath the waves. The sword ere now had cut
My thread of life, but slander'd innocence
Made its cry heard, and I resolved to die
In a more lingering way, confessing first
My penitence to you. A poison, brought
To Athens by Medea, runs thro' my veins.
Already in my heart the venom works,
Infusing there a strange and fatal chill;

Already as thro' thickening mists I see
The spouse to whom my presence is an outrage;
Death, from mine eyes veiling the light of heav'n,
Restores its purity that they defiled.

PANOPE. She dies, my lord!

THESEUS. Would that the memory
Of her disgraceful deed could perish with her!
Ah, disabused too late! Come, let us go,
And with the blood of mine unhappy son
Mingle our tears, clasping his dear remains,
In deep repentance for a pray'r detested.
Let him be honor'd as he well deserves;
And, to appease his sore offended ghost,
Be her near kinsmen's guilt whate'er it may,
Aricia shall be held my daughter from to-day.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

THE NATURE OF ROMANTIC TRAGEDY

In the *Poetics* Aristotle places action, which he calls the soul of the tragedy, before character. It may be said broadly that Shakespeare reverses this emphasis and places character before action. In Greek tragedy our thoughts and interests are centered more upon the implications of the action, than, as in Shakespearean tragedy, upon the merits and failings of the characters. As C. E. Vaughn points out, the course of tragedy from ancient to modern times has been from the outward to the inward, from objective action, as in the dramas of Sophocles, to inner temperament and mood, as represented partly in the plays of Shakespeare and wholly in modern plays like Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande*. In the Romantic type of tragedy, which the plays of Shakespeare exemplify, though the action may have magnitude, the characters are greater than the plot in which they are involved. In the Classic type the hero is an agent of the plot; he exists only for the action and within its confines, and contributes only what is necessary to it; hence arises the comparative simplicity of his character. In his struggle with the decrees of Destiny he reveals the general and typical characteristics of human life, and he is judged by his deeds. In Shakespearean tragedy, on the contrary, the hero is not so much an agent of the action as an end in himself. In addition to the general traits, he displays a multiplicity of individual motives and rich variations of human nature. He is judged, not solely by his deeds, but by his intents.

"Classic art," says Heine "portrays the finite, Romantic the infinite." Because the romantic Shakespearean hero is so much greater than the world of circumstance enveloping him, because he lives a larger life than the plot, he becomes a personality which we carry outside the drama for pleasurable recollection and endless discussion. Hamlet, Lear, Othello, Macbeth, all are personalities that cannot be measured in

terms of the pitiful course of intrigue and circumstance in which they meet their doom. Shakespeare fills us with wonder and astonishment that men of such great possibilities should be brought low by accidents of fortune and temperaments incompatible with the conditions of life. Man is infinitely more complex than the Greeks conceived him to be; life is more than a struggle against the decrees of the gods.

The irony of Shakespearean tragedy lies then in this contrast between the greatness of the promise and the lamentable conclusion. In almost all of the Shakespearean tragedies a man of great potentialities becomes involved in a conflict that ends in his defeat and death. The conflict is not only with his antagonists, but also with himself. His great capacities for good are thwarted, sometimes principally by the forces of chance, or by circumstances beyond his control as in *Romeo and Juliet;* sometimes primarily by forces of evil within himself as in *Richard III* and *Macbeth;* sometimes chiefly by the crimes and intrigues of his fellows as in *Othello;* sometimes by a deficiency in his own equipment as in *Richard II, Brutus,* and *Hamlet;* sometimes by all of these together as in *Lear.* Shakespeare is universal in his revelation of the multiform ways in which human beings are overthrown; "his glory", said Tennyson, "is that he can give you the incongruity of things".

The chastened pity and the terror aroused in all great tragic art are abundantly present in the tragedies of Shakespeare. We may pause merely to give a single illustration of each. Kent, watching the heart-break of his royal master, Lear, calls forth our pity in the lines:

> "O, let him pass! he hates him
> That would upon the rack of this tough world
> Stretch him out longer". (V. iii)

The Doctor watching in terror the self-revelations and self-tortures of Lady Macbeth gives voice to our tragic fear when he says:

> "More needs she the divine, than the physician,
> God, God forgive us all!" (V. ii)

Shakespearean tragedy goes further, however, than the Greek, and brings an additional tragic relief by compelling in

us an admiration for the heroes in spite of their calamitous plight. What is subsidiary in Greek tragedy seems to be purposely emphasized by Shakespeare. We wonder as we see Romeo and Juliet caught in the toils of hate and chance which of us would not be lovers to the death if our passions could attain such ardor and loveliness, such fidelity and strength as theirs. In other tragedies Shakespeare not only creates admiration for the heroes because of what they are, but reinforces our admiration with praise uttered by their friends, or even their foes: "This was the noblest Roman of them all", cries Antony as he stands by the body of his enemy, Brutus; "Now cracks a noble heart", says Horatio at the last breath of Hamlet. As Othello rises by sheer will power out of chaos to deliver his last great speech, he seems so much nobler and grander than the net of villainy which has destroyed him that we echo with Cassio: "For he was great of heart". Because of this insistence upon the inner nobility of character, Shakespeare's tragedies never leave us depressed or disgusted, but fortify our belief in the imaginative possibilities of what is best in human nature and human life.

OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(1604)

INTRODUCTION

In *Hamlet, Richard II, Julius Cæsar, Lear, Macbeth,* and *Antony and Cleopatra* the disaster which befalls the hero is brought on largely by his own deficiencies. Othello's tragedy, on the contrary, is the result primarily of villainy and chance. The hero's virtues of magnanimity and trust in human nature are exploited by a marble-hearted fiend. No other tragedy of Shakespeare is so painful to watch; no other Shakespearean hero suffers so continuously or with such intensity as Othello; and no other tragedy makes us wish so intensely to rush in ourselves and try to stop the course of the drama. The pain and pity sometimes come home so poignantly as to arouse members of an audience even to action. In a Baltimore theater an actor playing Othello was shot by an army officer, and there are other instances of exclamation and interruption in the stage history of the play to show how painful is its appeal. *Othello* depicts no remote issues, like the ambition for crowns, or the partition of kingdoms, or the revenge for the murder of a father, or the splendor and tragedy of lust's dominion, but the personal issue of boundless love poisoned by fatal suspicion and jealousy; it reveals the mind of a great man gradually made poisonous and filthy until it commands and commits the murder of those dearest to his heart.

Othello differs also from the other tragedies in structure. It is not only one of the most perfect of Shakespeare's tragedies in mastery of the plot, but the only one in which the action originates outside the protagonist and without his knowledge, so that the Moor, though he is protagonist in the play, is antagonist in the plot. The first two acts are largely given over to Iago's machinations; it is not until the middle of the third act, in the great temptation scene, that the main intrigue begins and Othello becomes the central figure.

The tragedy of Othello illustrates how a virtue may be a man's undoing, how a

"free and open nature
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so"

may be aroused to murderous fury after skillful and prolonged goading by an adept in the use of false insinuation. The critics who complain that Othello is too easily jealous underestimate the difficulties and dangers Iago underwent to achieve his end; and also the succession of emotions through which Othello passes—through doubt, wounded pride, and grief to jealousy. But it is not jealousy that prompts his murder of Desdemona, for by that time he has passed beyond this feeling; from jealousy his passion has mounted to revenge, and at the end of Act III, Scene 4, he has become a raving savage. This savagery now alternates in Act IV with the larger mood of pity.

"O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!"

and presently the passion of pity is succeeded by the lofty mood of justice. It is from the sublime pinnacle of justice, as a divine avenger that he moves to his appalling deed:

"Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men",

and love and justice struggle in his heart for dominance as he says:

"Ah, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword!"

Then, when his sublime certainty has crashed into a thousand fragments, and left him so unmanned that he cannot even kill Iago, he still is able to surmount the chaos that has come and with majestic dignity admit that he threw

"a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe".

Then like Hamlet he begs his friends to guard the name he shall leave behind by speaking of him as one

"that loved not wisely, but too well,
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplex'd in the extreme".

In no other of Shakespeare's plays has chance so unerringly gone hand in hand with evil. A false word here, a gesture

there, a slip of Iago's tongue; if Cassio had spoken Bianca's name while Othello listened close by, or Desdemona had confessed the loss of the handkerchief when Othello questioned her—under any one of these chances, Iago's plot must have fallen to pieces. But from the inception of the scheme circumstances act to further it. It is Shakespeare's consummate art that makes such a string of coincidences and accidents plausible, even inevitable.

Evil and Iago's name have been synonymous in literature since Shakespeare's own day, but it must be understood that Iago is no Mephistopheles or mere stage devil or unnatural monster like Count Cenci. Appalling it is that such great malice should be bound inextricably with Iago's many admirable qualities; his blunt and apparently open nature which makes the characters call him "honest Iago" fifteen times; his good nature, which makes him always the leader in the tavern routs; his ability as a soldier, fearless, daring, and dependable; and his intelligence, in which he is far superior to those about him. This mental keeness has been called by Professor A. C. Bradley, one of the main causes of his villainy. What, he asks, could be more satisfying to a man of Iago's intelligence, when he feels himself slighted and is unrestrained by moral scruples, than to devise a scheme by which those whose slight he would repay may be made to dance like marionettes at his command, while he "plumes up his will" by watching them? Whether we explain Iago in this way or accept Coleridge's reading of his character as dominated by a spirit of "motiveless malignity", his mental superiority cannot be denied. Yet, even as Othello's greatest virtue led to ruin, so Iago's intelligence fails him at last. Thoroughly selfish himself and arrogant in his selfishness, he attributed his own motives to others. Their characters he saw in the light of his own. Since love to him was lust only, he could not understand how it should be otherwise with Othello and Desdemona. Since friendship to him was for profit only, Emilia's devotion to Desdemona must be for profit only. Certain of his wife, that she would shield him when necessity arose, he utterly failed to realize her loyalty to Desdemona; so that it is through her that his scheme finally collapses.

It is interesting at this point to observe the balancing of the

characters in the play: on the one hand Othello, the hero, Desdemona, the good woman, and Cassio, the good man duped; on the other, Iago, the villain, Emilia, far from guiltless yet only passively guilty, and Roderigo, the evil man duped. The fortunes of each group are tied up together, and each member of the second contributes in some way to the misfortunes of the first. Each, moreover, though only Iago is deliberately a villain, exhibits a fault which helps to determine the catastrophe. In Roderigo it is lust; in Cassio susceptibility to drink; in Emilia partly lack of insight, partly lack of scruple. Even Desdemona, innocent victim in the tragedy as she is, has made her mistake. Perfect frankness with Othello might have saved them both.

Desdemona's error, bred as it was of fear, does not reconcile us to her fate. There is no poetic justice in this tragedy. The truly guilty are not punished, and the unfortunate suffer immeasurably beyond their deserts. Of Desdemona is this especially true. Her death is "the most nearly intolerable spectacle that Shakespeare offers us". The end of the play comes as a relief. That Iago suffers not at all curiously affects us little. The rage and indignation we feel against him, as Professor Bradley shrewdly points out, find vent in the denunciatory speeches of Emilia.

Such is "the essense of great tragedy", writes Santayana, "the sense of the finished life, of the will fulfilled and enlightened: that purging of the mind so much debated upon, which relieves us of our pent-up energies, transfers our feelings to a greater object, and thus justifies and entertains our dumb passions, detaching them at the same time for a moment from their accidental occasions in our earthly life".

References.

Radically opposed modern interpretations of *Othello* may be found in A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Macmillan, New York, 1908), and E. E. Stoll, *Othello* (University of Minnesota Studies, Minneapolis, 1915); Welker Given, *A Further Study of Othello* (The Shakespeare Press, New York, 1899).

TEXT OF THE PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Duke of Venice

Brabantio, *a Senator*

Other Senators

Gratiano, *Brother to Brabantio*

Lodovico, *Kinsman to Brabantio*

Othello, *a noble Moor in the service of the Venetian state*

Cassio, *his Lieutenant*

Iago, *his Ancient*

Roderigo, *a Venetian Gentleman*

Montano, *Governor of Cyprus*

Clown, *Servant to Othello*

Desdemona, *Daughter to Brabantio and Wife to Othello*

Emilia, *Wife to Iago*

Bianca, *Mistress to Cassio*

Sailor, Messengers, Herald, Officers, Gentlemen, Musicians, and Attendants

Scene.—*For the first Act, in Venice; during the rest of the Play, at a Sea-port in Cyprus*

OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Venice. A Street.*

[*Enter* RODERIGO *and* IAGO.]

RODERIGO. Tush! never tell me; I take it much unkindly
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
As if the strings were thine, should'st know of this.
IAGO. 'Sblood, but you will not hear me:
If ever I did dream of such a matter,
Abhor me.
RODERIGO. Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.
IAGO. Despise me if I do not. Three great ones of the city.
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
Off-capp'd to him; and, by the faith of man,
I know my price, I am worth no worse a place;
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
Evades them, with a bombast circumstance
Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war;
And, in conclusion,
Nonsuits my mediators; for, 'Certes,' says he,
'I have already chose my officer.'
And what was he?
Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,
A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife;
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theoric,
Wherein the toged consuls can propose
As masterly as he: mere prattle, without practice,

Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had the election;
And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds
Christian and heathen, must be be-lee'd and calm'd
By debitor and creditor, this counter-caster;
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,
And I, God bless the mark! his Moorship's ancient.

RODERIGO. By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

IAGO. But there's no remedy: 'tis the curse of service,
Preferment goes by letter and affection,
And not by old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge yourself,
Whether I in any just term am affin'd
To love the Moor.

RODERIGO. I would not follow him then.

IAGO. O! sir, content you;
I follow him to serve my turn upon him;
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd;
Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by them, and when they have lin'd their coats
Do themselves homage: these fellows have some soul;
And such a one do I profess myself. For, sir,
It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:
In following him, I follow but myself;
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end:
For when my outward action doth demonstrate

The native act and figure of my heart
In compliment extern, 't is not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.

RODERIGO. What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,
If he can carry 't thus!

IAGO. Call up her father;
Rouse him, make after him, poison his delight,
Proclaim him in the streets, incense her kinsmen,
And, though he in a fertile climate dwell,
Plague him with flies; though that his joy be joy,
Yet throw such changes of vexation on 't
As it may lose some colour.

RODERIGO. Here is her father's house; I 'll call aloud.

IAGO. Do; with like timorous accent and dire yell
As when, by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities.

RODERIGO. What, ho! Brabantio! Signior Brabantio, ho!

IAGO. Awake! what, ho! Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!
Thieves! thieves!

[*Enter* BRABANTIO, *above, at a window.*]

BRABANTIO. What is the reason of this terrible summons?
What is the matter there?

RODERIGO. Signior, is all your family within?

IAGO. Are your doors lock'd?

BRABANTIO. Why? wherefore ask you this?

IAGO. 'Zounds! sir, you 're robb'd; for shame, put on your gown;
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul;
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise!
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
Arise, I say.

BRABANTIO. What! have you lost your wits?
RODERIGO. Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?
BRABANTIO. Not I; what are you?
RODERIGO. My name is Roderigo.
BRABANTIO. The worser welcome:
I have charg'd thee not to haunt about my doors:
In honest plainness thou hast heard me say
My daughter is not for thee; and now, in madness,
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,
Upon malicious bravery dost thou come
To start my quiet.
RODERIGO. Sir, sir, sir!
BRABANTIO. But thou must needs be sure
My spirit and my place have in them power
To make this bitter to thee.
RODERIGO. Patience, good sir.
BRABANTIO. What tell'st thou me of robbing? this is Venice;
My house is not a grange.
RODERIGO. Most grave Brabantio,
In simple and pure soul I come to you.
IAGO. 'Zounds! sir; you are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service and you think we are ruffians, you 'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you 'll have your nephews neigh to you; you 'll have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans.
BRABANTIO. What profane wretch art thou?
IAGO. I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs.
BRABANTIO. Thou art a villain.
IAGO. You are—a senator.
BRABANTIO. This thou shalt answer; I know thee, Roderigo.
RODERIGO. Sir, I will answer any thing. But I beseech you,
If 't be your pleasure and most wise consent,
As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter,
At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,
Transported with no worse nor better guard

But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor,—
If this be known to you and your allowance,
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs;
But if you know not this, my manners tell me
We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe
That, from the sense of all civility,
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence:
Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,
I say again, hath made a gross revolt;
Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and every where. Straight satisfy yourself:
If she be in her chamber or your house,
Let loose on me the justice of the state
For thus deluding you.

BRABANTIO. Strike on the tinder, ho!
Give me a taper! call up all my people!
This accident is not unlike my dream;
Belief of it oppresses me already.
Light, I say! light! [*Exit from above.*]

IAGO. Farewell; for I must leave you:
It seems not meet nor wholesome to my place
To be produc'd, as if I stay I shall,
Against the Moor; for I do know the state,
However this may gall him with some check,
Cannot with safety cast him; for he 's embark'd
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
Which even now stand in act, that, for their souls,
Another of his fathom they have none,
To lead their business; in which regard,
Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely find him,
Lead to the Sagittary the raised search;
And there will I be within. So, farewell. [*Exit*]

[*Enter* BRABANTIO *and Servants with torches.*]

BRABANTIO. It is too true an evil; gone she is,
And what 's to come of my despised time
Is nought but bitterness. Now, Roderigo,
Where didst thou see her? O unhappy girl!
With the Moor, say'st thou? Who would be a father?
How didst thou know 't was she? O! she deceives me
Past thought. What said she to you? Get more tapers!
Raise all my kindred! Are they married, think you?

RODERIGO. Truly, I think they are.

BRABANTIO. O heaven! How got she out? O! treason of the blood:
Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds
By what you see them act. Is there not charms
By which the property of youth and maidhood
May be abus'd? Have you not read, Roderigo,
Of some such thing?

RODERIGO. Yes, sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO. Call up my brother. O! would you had had her.
Some one way, some another! Do you know
Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

RODERIGO. I think I can discover him, if you please
To get good guard and go along with me.

BRABANTIO. Pray you, lead on. At every house I 'll call;
I may command at most. Get weapons, ho!
And raise some special officers of night.
On, good Roderigo; I'll deserve your pains. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Another Street.*

[*Enter* OTHELLO, IAGO, *and Attendants with torches.*]

IAGO. Though in the trade of war I have slain men,
Yet do I hold it very stuff o' the conscience
To do no contriv'd murder: I lack iniquity
Sometimes to do me service. Nine or ten times
I had thought to have yerk'd him here under the ribs.

OTHELLO. 'T is better as it is.

IAGO. Nay, but he prated
And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
Against your honour
That, with the little godliness I have,
I did full hard forbear him. But, I pray you, sir,
Are you fast married? Be assur'd of this,
That the magnifico is much belov'd,
And hath in his effect a voice potential
As double as the duke's; he will divorce you,
Or put upon you what restraint and grievance
The law, with all his might to enforce it on,
Will give him cable.

OTHELLO. Let him do his spite:
My services which I have done the signiory
Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'T is yet to know,
Which when I know that boasting is an honour
I shall promulgate, I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd; for know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's worth. But, look! what lights come yond?

IAGO. These are the raised father and his friends:
You were best go in.

OTHELLO. Not I; I must be found:
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

IAGO. By-Janus, I think no.

[*Enter* CASSIO *and certain Officers with torches.*]

OTHELLO. The servants of the duke, and my lieutenant.
The goodness of the night upon you, friends!
What is the news?

CASSIO. The duke does greet you, general,

And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance,
Even on the instant.

OTHELLO. What is the matter, think you?

CASSIO. Something from Cyprus, as I may divine.
It is a business of some heat; the galleys
Have sent a dozen sequent messengers
This very night at one another's heels,
And many of the consuls, rais'd and met,
Are at the duke's already. You have been hotly call'd for;
When, being not at your lodging to be found,
The senate hath sent about three several quests
To search you out.

OTHELLO. 'T is well I am found by you.
I will but spend a word here in the house,
And go with you. [*Exit.*]

CASSIO. Ancient, what makes he here?

IAGO. Faith, he to-night hath boarded a land carack;
If it prove lawful prize, he 's made for ever.

CASSIO. I do not understand.

IAGO. He 's married.

CASSIO. To who?

[*Re-enter* OTHELLO.]

IAGO. Marry, to—Come, captain, will you go?

OTHELLO. Have with you.

CASSIO. Here comes another troop to seek for you.

IAGO. It is Brabantio. General, be advis'd;
He comes to bad intent.

[*Enter* BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, *and Officers with torches and weapons.*]

OTHELLO. Holla! stand there!

RODERIGO. Signior, it is the Moor.

BRABANTIO. Down with him, thief!

[*They draw on both sides.*]

IAGO. You, Roderigo! come, sir, I am for you.

OTHELLO. Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.

Good signior, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons.

BRABANTIO. O thou foul thief! where hast thou stow'd my daughter?
Damn'd as thou art, thou hast enchanted her;
For I 'll refer me to all things of sense,
If she in chains of magic were not bound,
Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage that she shunn'd
The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou; to fear, not to delight.
Judge me the world, if 't is not gross in sense
That thou has practis'd on her with foul charms,
Abus'd her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
That weaken motion: I 'll have 't disputed on;
'T is probable and palpable to thinking.
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee
For an abuser of the world, a practiser
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.
Lay hold upon him: if he do resist,
Subdue him at his peril.

OTHELLO. Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining, and the rest:
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter. Where will you that I go
To answer this your charge?

BRABANTIO. To prison: till fit time
Of law and course of direct session
Call three to answer.

OTHELLO. What if I do obey?
How may the duke be therewith satisfied,
Whose messengers are here about my side,
Upon some present business of the state
To bring me to him?

OFFICER. 'T is true, most worthy signior;
The duke 's in council, and your noble self,
I am sure, is sent for.
BRABANTIO. How! the duke in council!
In this time of the night! Bring him away.
Mine 's not an idle cause: the duke himself,
Or any of my brothers of the state,
Cannot but feel this wrong as 't were their own;
For if such actions may have passage free,
Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Council-chamber.*

[*The* DUKE *and Senators sitting at a table; Officers attending.*]

DUKE. There is no composition in these news
That gives them credit.
FIRST SENATOR. Indeed, they are disproportion'd;
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.
DUKE. And mine, a hundred and forty.
SECOND SENATOR. And mine, two hundred:
But though they jump not on a just account,
As in these cases, where the aim reports,
'T is oft with difference, yet do they all confirm
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus.
DUKE. Nay, it is possible enough to judgment:
I do not so secure me in the error,
But the main article I do approve
In fearful sense.
SAILOR WITHIN. What, ho! what, ho! what, ho!
OFFICER. A messenger from the galleys.

[*Enter Sailor.*]

DUKE. Now, what 's the business?
SAILOR. The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes;
So was I bid report here to the state
By Signior Angelo.

DUKE. How say you by this change?
FIRST SENATOR. This cannot be,
By no assay of reason; 't is a pageant
To keep us in false gaze. When we consider
The importancy of Cyprus to the Turk,
And let ourselves again but understand,
That as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes,
So may he with more facile question bear it,
For that it stands not in such war-like brace,
But altogether lacks the abilities
That Rhodes is dress'd in: if we make thought of this,
We must not think the Turk is so unskillful
To leave that latest which concerns him first,
Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain,
To wake and wage a danger profitless.
DUKE. Nay, in all confidence, he 's not for Rhodes.
FIRST OFFICER. Here is more news.

[*Enter a Messenger.*]

MESSENGER. The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,
Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes,
Have there injointed them with an after fleet.
FIRST SENATOR. Ay, so I thought. How many, as you guess?
MESSENGER. Of thirty sail; and now they do re-stem
Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance
Their purposes toward Cyprus. Signior Montano,
Your trusty and most valiant servitor,
With his free duty recommends you thus,
And prays you to believe him.
DUKE. 'T is certain then for Cyprus.
Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?
FIRST SENATOR. He 's now in Florence.
DUKE. Write from us to him; post-post-haste dispatch.
FIRST SENATOR. Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

[*Enter* BRABANTIO, OTHELLO, IAGO, RODERIGO, *and Officers.*]

DUKE. Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you
Against the general enemy Ottoman.
[*To* BRABANTIO.] I did not see you; welcome, gentle signior;
We lack'd your counsel and your help to-night.

BRABANTIO. So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me;
Neither my place nor aught I heard of business
Hath rais'd me from my bed, nor doth the general care
Take hold on me, for my particular grief
Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature
That it engluts and swallows other sorrows
And it is still itself.

DUKE. Why, what 's the matter?

BRABANTIO. My daughter! O! my daughter.

DUKE, SENATOR. Dead?

BRABANTIO. Ay, to me;
She is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
For nature so preposterously to err,
Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
Sans witchcraft could not.

DUKE. Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding
Hath thus beguil'd your daughter of herself
And you of her, the bloody book of law
You shall yourself read in the bitter letter
After your own sense; yea, though our proper son
Stood in your action.

BRABANTIO. Humbly I thank your grace.
Here is the man, this Moor; whom now, it seems,
Your special mandate for the state affairs
Hath hither brought.

DUKE, SENATOR. We are very sorry for 't.

DUKE. [*To* OTHELLO.] What, in your own part, can you say to this?

BRABANTIO. Nothing, but this is so.

OTHELLO. Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
My very noble and approv'd good masters,
That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,

It is most true; true, I have married her:
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in my speech,
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace;
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have us'd
Their dearest action in the tented field;
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle;
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver
Of my whole course of love; what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration, and what mighty magic,
For such proceeding I am charg'd withal,
I won his daughter.

BRABANTIO. A maiden never bold;
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
Blush'd at herself; and she, in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, every thing,
To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!
It is a judgment maim'd and most imperfect
That will confess perfection so could err
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven
To find out practices of cunning hell,
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again
That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood,
Or with some dram conjur'd to this effect,
He wrought upon her.

DUKE. To vouch this, is no proof,
Without more wider and more overt test
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
Of modern seeming do prefer against him.

FIRST SENATOR. But, Othello, speak:
Did you by indirect and forced courses
Subdue and poison this young maid's affections;

Or came it by request and such fair question
As soul to soul affordeth?

OTHELLO. I do beseech you,
Send for the lady to the Sagittary,
And let her speak of me before her father:
If you do find me foul in her report,
The trust, the office I do hold of you,
Not only take away, but let your sentence
Even fall upon my life.

DUKE. Fetch Desdemona hither.

OTHELLO. Ancient, conduct them; you best know the place.

[*Exeunt* IAGO *and Attendants.*]

And, till she come, as truly as to heaven
I do confess the vices of my blood,
So justly to your grave ears I 'll present
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love,
And she in mine.

DUKE. Say it, Othello.

OTHELLO. Her father lov'd me; oft invited me;
Still question'd me the story of my life
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have pass'd.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
And portance in my travels' history;
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven,
It was my hint to speak, such was the process;
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear

Would Desdemona seriously incline;
But still the house-affairs would draw her hence;
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
She 'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse. Which I observing,
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
But not intentively: I did consent;
And often did beguile her of her tears,
When I did speak of some distressful stroke
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
She swore, in faith, 't was strange, 't was passing strange;
'T was pitiful, 't was wondrous pitiful:
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
That heaven had made her such a man; she thank'd me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:
She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have us'd:
Here comes the lady; let her witness it.

[*Enter* Desdemona, Iago, *and Attendants.*]

Duke. I think this tale would win my daughter too.
Good Brabantio,
Take up this mangled matter at the best;
Men do their broken weapons rather use
Than their bare hands.

Brabantio. I pray you, hear her speak:
If she confess that she was half the wooer,
Destruction on my head, if my bad blame
Light on the man! Come hither, gentle mistress:

Do you perceive in all this noble company
Where most you owe obedience?
DESDEMONA. My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty:
To you I am bound for life and education;
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;
I am hitherto your daughter: but here 's my husband;
And so much duty as my mother show'd
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord.
BRABANTIO. God be with you! I have done.
Please it your grace, on to the state affairs:
I had rather to adopt a child than get it.
Come hither, Moor:
I here do give thee that with all my heart
Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
I would keep from thee. For your sake, jewel,
I am glad at soul I have no other child;
For thy escape would teach me tyranny,
To hang clogs on them. I have done, my lord.
DUKE. Let me speak like yourself, and lay a sentence,
Which, as a grize or step, may help these lovers
Into your favour.
When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
Is the next way to draw new mischief on.
What cannot be preserv'd when fortune takes
Patience her injury a mockery makes.
The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief;
He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.
BRABANTIO. So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile;
We lose it not so long as we can smile.
He bears the sentence well that nothing bears
But the free comfort which from thence he hears;

But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.
These sentences, to sugar or to gall,
Being strong on both sides, are equivocal:
But words are words; I never yet did hear
That the bruis'd heart was pierced through the ear.
I humbly beseech you, proceed to the affairs of state.

DUKE. The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus. Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to you; and though we have there a substitute of most allowed sufficiency, yet opinion, a sovereign mistress of effects, throws a more safer voice on you: you must therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition.

OTHELLO. The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down: I do agnize
A natural and prompt alacrity
I find in hardness, and do undertake
These present wars against the Ottomites.
Most humbly therefore bending to your state,
I crave fit disposition for my wife,
Due reference of place and exhibition,
With such accommodation and besort
As levels with her breeding.

DUKE. If you please,
Be 't at her father's.

BRABANTIO. I 'll not have it so.

OTHELLO. Nor I.

DESDEMONA. Nor I; I would not there reside,
To put my father in impatient thoughts
By being in his eye. Most gracious duke,
To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear;
And let me find a charter in your voice
To assist my simpleness.

DUKE. What would you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA. That I did love the Moor to live with him,
My downright violence and storm of fortunes
May trumpet to the world; my heart's subdued
Even to the very quality of my lord;
I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
And to his honours and his valiant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
The rights for which I love him are bereft me,
And I a heavy interim shall support
By his dear absence. Let me go with him.

OTHELLO. Let her have your voices.
Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not
To please the palate of my appetite,
Nor to comply with heat, the young affects
In me defunct, and proper satisfaction,
But to be free and bounteous to her mind;
And heaven defend your good souls that you think
I will your serious and great business scant
For she is with me. No, when light-wing'd toys
Of feather'd Cupid seel with wanton dulness
My speculative and offic'd instruments,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
And all indign and base adversities
Make head against my estimation!

DUKE. Be it as you shall privately determine,
Either for her stay or going. The affair cries haste,
And speed must answer it.

FIRST SENATOR. You must away to-night.

OTHELLO. With all my heart.

DUKE. At nine i' the morning here we 'll meet again.
Othello, leave some officer behind,
And he shall our commission bring to you;
With such things else of quality and respect
As doth import you.

OTHELLO. So please your grace, my ancient;
A man he is of honesty and trust:
To his conveyance I assign my wife,
With what else needful your good grace shall think
To be sent after me.

DUKE. Let it be so.
Good night to every one. [*To* BRABANTIO.] And, noble signior,
If virtue no delighted beauty lack,
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

FIRST SENATOR. Adieu, brave Moor! use Desdemona well.

BRABANTIO. Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee.

[*Exeunt* DUKE, *Senators, Officers, etc.*]

OTHELLO. My life upon her faith! Honest Iago,
My Desdemona must I leave to thee:
I prithee, let thy wife attend on her;
And bring them after in the best advantage.
Come, Desdemona; I have but an hour
Of love, of worldly matters and direction,
To spend with thee: we must obey the time.

[*Exeunt* OTHELLO *and* DESDEMONA.]

RODERIGO. Iago!

IAGO. What say'st thou, noble heart?

RODERIGO. What will I do, think'st thou?

IAGO. Why, go to bed, and sleep.

RODERIGO. I will incontinently drown myself.

IAGO. Well, if thou dost, I shall never love thee after it. Why, thou silly gentleman!

RODERIGO. It is silliness to live when to live is a torment; and then have a prescription to die when death is our physician.

IAGO. O! villanous; I have looked upon the world for four times seven years, and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found a man that knew how to love himself. Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.

Roderigo. What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond; but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

Iago. Virtue! a fig! 't is in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions; but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.

Roderigo. It cannot be.

Iago. It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will. Come, be a man. Drown thyself! drown cats and blind puppies. I have professed me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness; I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse; follow these wars; defeat thy favour with an usurped beard; I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor,—put money in thy purse,—nor he his to her: it was a violent commencement in her, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration; put but money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills;—fill thy purse with money:—the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice. She must have change, she must: therefore, put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst. If sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a supersubtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her; therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself! it is clean out of the way; seek

thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her.

RODERIGO. Wilt thou be fast to my hopes, if I depend on the issue?

IAGO. Thou art sure of me: go, make money. I have told thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again I hate the Moor: my cause is hearted; thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him; if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered. Traverse; go: provide thy money. We will have more of this to-morrow. Adieu.

RODERIGO. Where shall we meet i' the morning?

IAGO. At my lodging.

RODERIGO. I 'll be with thee betimes.

IAGO. Go to; farewell. Do you hear, Roderigo?

RODERIGO. What say you?

IAGO. No more of drowning, do you hear?

RODERIGO. I am changed. I 'll sell all my land.

IAGO. Go to; farewell! put money enough in your purse.

[*Exit* RODERIGO.]

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office: I know not if 't be true,
Yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio 's a proper man; let me see now:
To get his place and to plume up my will
In double knavery; how, how? Let ' see:
After some time, to abuse Othello 's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife:
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, fram'd to make women false.

The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.
I have 't; it is engender'd: hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

[*Exit.*]

ACT II

Scene I.—*A Sea-port Town in Cyprus. An Open Place near the Quay.*

[*Enter* Montano *and two Gentlemen.*]

Montano. What from the cape can you discern at sea?

First Gentleman. Nothing at all: it is a high-wrought flood;
I cannot 'twixt the heaven and the main
Descry a sail.

Montano. Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land;
A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements;
If it hath ruffian'd so upon the sea,
What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,
Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?

Second Gentleman. A segregation of the Turkish fleet!
For do but stand upon the foaming shore,
The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds;
The wind-shak'd surge, with high and monstrous mane,
Seems to cast water on the burning Bear
And quench the guards of the ever-fixed pole:
I never did like molestation view
On the enchafed flood.

Montano. If that the Turkish fleet
Be not enshelter'd and embay'd, they are drown'd;
It is impossible they bear it out.

[*Enter a Third Gentleman.*]

THIRD GENTLEMAN. News, lads! our wars are done.
The desperate tempest hath so bang'd the Turks
That their designment halts; a noble ship of Venice
Hath seen a grievous wreck and sufferance
On most part of their fleet.

MONTANO. How! is this true?

THIRD GENTLEMAN. The ship is here put in,
A Veronesa; Michael Cassio,
Lieutenant to the war-like Moor Othello,
Is come on shore: the Moor himself at sea,
And is in full commission here for Cyprus.

MONTANO. I am glad on 't; 't is a worthy governor.

THIRD GENTLEMAN. But this same Cassio, though he speak of comfort
Touching the Turkish loss, yet he looks sadly
And prays the Moor be safe; for they were parted
With foul and violent tempest.

MONTANO. Pray heavens he be;
For I have serv'd him, and the man commands
Like a full soldier. Let 's to the sea-side, ho!
As well to see the vessel that 's come in
As to throw out our eyes for brave Othello,
Even till we make the main and the aerial blue
An indistinct regard.

THIRD GENTLEMAN. Come, let 's do so;
For every minute is expectancy
Of more arrivance.

[*Enter* CASSIO.]

CASSIO. Thanks, you the valiant of this warlike isle,
That so approve the Moor. O! let the heavens
Give him defence against the elements,
For I have lost him on a dangerous sea.

MONTANO. Is he well shipp'd?

CASSIO. His bark is stoutly timber'd, and his pilot
Of very expert and approv'd allowance;
Therefore my hopes, not surfeited to death,
Stand in bold cure. [*Cry within.*] A sail!—a sail!—a sail!

[*Enter a Messenger.*]

CASSIO. What noise?

MESSENGER. The town is empty; on the brow o' the sea
Stand ranks of people, and they cry 'A sail!'

CASSIO. My hopes do shape him for the governor.

[*Guns heard.*]

SECOND GENTLEMAN. They do discharge their shot of courtesy;
Our friends at least.

CASSIO. I pray you, sir, go forth,
And give us truth who 't is that is arriv'd.

SECOND GENTLEMAN. I shall. [*Exit.*]

MONTANO. But, good lieutenant, is your general wiv'd?

CASSIO. Most fortunately: he hath achiev'd a maid
That paragons description and wild fame;
One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens
And in the essential vesture of creation
Does tire the engineer.

[*Re-enter Second Gentleman.*]

How now! who has put in?

SECOND GENTLEMAN. 'T is one Iago, ancient to the general.

CASSIO. He has had most favourable and happy speed:
Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,
The gutter'd rocks, and congregated sands,
Traitors ensteep'd to clog the guiltless keel,
As having sense of beauty, do omit
Their mortal natures, letting go safely by
The divine Desdemona.

MONTANO. What is she?

CASSIO. She that I spake of, our great captain's captain,
Left in the conduct of the bold Iago,
Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts
A se'nnight's speed. Great Jove, Othello guard,
And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath,
That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,

Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms,
Give renew'd fire to our extincted spirits,
And bring all Cyprus comfort!

[*Enter* DESDEMONA, EMILIA, IAGO, RODERIGO, *and Attendants.*]

O! behold,
The riches of the ship is come on shore.
Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.
Hail to thee, lady! and the grace of heaven,
Before, behind thee, and on every hand,
Enwheel thee round!

DESDEMONA. I thank you, valiant Cassio.
What tidings can you tell me of my lord?

CASSIO. He is not yet arriv'd; nor know I aught
But that he 's well, and will be shortly here.

DESDEMONA. O! but I fear—How lost you company?

CASSIO. The great contention of the sea and skies
Parted our fellowship. But, hark! a sail.

[*Cry within.*] A sail!—a sail! [*Guns heard.*]

SECOND GENTLEMEN. They give their greeting to the citadel:
This likewise is a friend.

CASSIO. See for the news!

[*Exit Gentleman.*]

Good ancient, you are welcome. [*To* EMILIA.] Welcome, mistress.
Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
That I extend my manners; 't is my breeding
That gives me this bold show of courtesy.

[*Kissing her.*]

IAGO. Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,
You'd have enough.

DESDEMONA. Alas! she has no speech.

IAGO. In faith, too much;
I find it still when I have list to sleep:

Marry, before your ladyship, I grant,
She puts her tongue a little in her heart,
And chides with thinking.

EMILIA. You have little cause to say so.

IAGO. Come on, come on; you are pictures out of doors,
Bells in your parlours, wild cats in your kitchens,
Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
Players in your housewifery, and housewives in your beds.

DESDEMONA. O! fie upon thee, slanderer.

IAGO. Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk:
You rise to play and go to bed to work.

EMILIA. You shall not write my praise.

IAGO. No, let me not.

DESDEMONA. What would'st thou write of me, if thou should'st praise me?

IAGO. O gentle lady, do not put me to 't,
For I am nothing if not critical.

DESDEMONA. Come on; assay. There 's one gone to the harbour?

IAGO. Ay, madam.

DESDEMONA. I am not merry, but I do beguile
The thing I am by seeming otherwise.
Come, how would'st thou praise me?

IAGO. I am about it; but indeed my invention
Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frize;
It plucks out brains and all: but my Muse labours,
And thus she is deliver'd.
If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,
The one 's for use, the other useth it.

DESDEMONA. Well prais'd! How if she be black and witty?

IAGO. If she be black, and thereto have a wit,
She 'll find a white that shall her blackness fit.

DESDEMONA. Worse and worse.

EMILIA. How if fair and foolish?

IAGO. She never yet was foolish that was fair,
For even her folly help'd her to an heir.

DESDEMONA. These are old fond paradoxes to make fools

laugh i' the alehouse. What miserable praise hast thou for her that 's foul and foolish?

IAGO. There 's none so foul and foolish thereunto
But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do.

DESDEMONA. O heavy ignorance! thou praisest the worst best. But what praise could'st thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed, one that in the authority of her merit did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself?

IAGO. She that was ever fair and never proud,
Had tongue at will and yet was never loud,
Never lack'd gold and yet went never gay,
Fled from her wish and yet said 'Now I may,'
She that being anger'd, her revenge being nigh,
Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly,
She that in wisdom never was so frail
To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail,
She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind,
See suitors following and not look behind,
She was a wight, if ever such wight were,—

DESDEMONA. To do what?

IAGO. To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.

DESDEMONA. O most lame and impotent conclusion! Do not learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy husband. How say you, Cassio? is he not a most profane and liberal counsellor?

CASSIO. He speaks home, madam; you may relish him more in the soldier than in the scholar.

IAGO. [*Aside.*] He takes her by the palm; ay, well said, whisper; with as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do; I will gyve thee in thine own courtship. You say true, 't is so, indeed. If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the sir in. Very good; well kissed! an excellent courtesy! 't is so, indeed. Yet again your fingers to your lips? would they were clyster-pipes for your sake!

[*A trumpet heard.*]

The Moor! I know his trumpet.

CASSIO. 'T is truly so.

DESDEMONA. Let 's meet him and receive him

CASSIO. Lo! where he comes.

[*Enter* OTHELLO *and Attendants.*]

OTHELLO. O my fair warrior!

DESDEMONA. My dear Othello!

OTHELLO. It gives me wonder great as my content
To see you here before me. O my soul's joy!
If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death!
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell 's from heaven! If it were now to die,
'T were now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

DESDEMONA. The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase
Even as our days do grow!

OTHELLO. Amen to that, sweet powers!
I cannot speak enough of this content;
It stops me here; it is too much of joy:
And this, and this, the greatest discords be

[*Kissing her.*]

That e'er our hearts shall make!

IAGO. [*Aside.*] O! you are well tun'd now,
But I 'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.

OTHELLO. Come, let us to the castle.
News, friends; our wars are done, the Turks are drown'd.
How does my old acquaintance of this isle?
Honey, you shall be well desir'd in Cyprus;
I have found great love amongst them. O my sweet,

I prattle out of fashion, and I dote
In mine own comforts. I prithee, good Iago,
Go to the bay and disembark my coffers.
Bring thou the master to the citadel;
He is a good one, and his worthiness
Does challenge much respect. Come, Desdemona,
Once more well met at Cyprus.

[*Exeunt* Othello, Desdemona, *and Attendants.*]

Iago. Do thou meet me presently at the harbour. Come hither. If thou be'st valiant, as they say base men being in love have then a nobility in their natures more than is native to them, list me. The lieutenant to-night watches on the court of guard: first, I must tell thee this; Desdemona is directly in love with him.

Roderigo. With him! why, 't is not possible.

Iago. Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies: and will she love him still for prating? let not thy discreet heart think it. Her eye must be fed; and what delight shall she have to look on the devil? When the blood is made dull with the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame it, and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favour, sympathy in years, manners and beauties; all which the Moor is defective in. Now, for want of these required conveniences, her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to heave the gorge, disrelish and abhor the Moor; very nature will instruct her in it and compel her to some second choice. Now, sir, this granted, as it is a most pregnant and unforced position, who stands so eminent in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does? a knave very voluble, no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection? why, none; why, none: a slipper and subtle knave, a finder-out of occasions, that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages, though true advantage never present itself; a devilish knave! Besides, the

knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after; a pestilent complete knave! and the woman hath found him already.

Roderigo. I cannot believe that in her; she 's full of most blessed condition.

Iago. Blessed fig's end! the wine she drinks is made of grapes; if she had been blessed she would never have loved the Moor; blessed pudding! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? didst not mark that?

Roderigo. Yes, that I did; but that was but courtesy.

Iago. Lechery, by this hand! an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together. Villainous thoughts, Roderigo! when these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, the incorporate conclusion. Pish! But, sir, be you ruled by me: I have brought you from Venice. Watch you to-night; for the command, I'll lay 't upon you: Cassio knows you not. I'll not be far from you: do you find some occasion to anger Cassio, either by speaking too loud, or tainting his discipline; or from what other course you please, which the time shall more favourably administer.

Roderigo. Well.

Iago. Sir, he is rash and very sudden in choler, and haply may strike at you: provoke him, that he may; for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny, whose qualification shall come into no true taste again but by the displanting of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your desires by the means I shall then have to prefer them; and the impediment most profitably removed, without the which there were no exception of our prosperity.

Roderigo. I will do this, if you can bring it to any opportunity.

Iago. I warrant thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel: I must fetch his necessaries ashore. Farewell.

Roderigo. Adieu.

[*Exit.*]

IAGO. That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it;
That she loves him, 't is apt and of great credit:
The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature;
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too;
Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin,
But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof
Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards;
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife;
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do,
If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trash
For his quick hunting, stand the putting-on,
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip;
Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb,
For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too,
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,
For making him egregiously an ass
And practicing upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness. 'T is here, but yet confus'd:
Knavery's plain face is never seen till us'd.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Street.*

[*Enter a Herald with a proclamation; People following.*]

HERALD. It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph; some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him; for, besides

these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial. So much was his pleasure should be proclaimed. All offices are open, and there is full liberty of feasting from this present hour of five till the bell have told eleven. Heaven bless the isle of Cyprus and our noble general, Othello!

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene III.—*A Hall in the Castle.*

[*Enter* Othello, Desdemona, Cassio *and Attendants.*]

Othello. Good Michael, look you to the guard to-night:
Let's teach ourselves that honourable stop.
Not to out-sport discretion.

Cassio. Iago hath direction what to do;
But, notwithstanding, with my personal eye
Will I look to 't.

Othello. Iago is most honest.
Michael, good night; to-morrow with your earliest
Let me have speech with you. [*To* Desdemona.] Come, my dear love,
The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue;
That profit 's yet to come 'twixt me and you.
Good night.

[*Exeunt* Othello, Desdemona, *and Attendants.*]

[*Enter* Iago.]

Cassio. Welcome, Iago; we must to the watch.

Iago. Not this hour, lieutenant; 't is not yet ten o' the clock. Our general cast us thus early for the love of his Desdemona, who let us not therefore blame; he hath not yet made wanton the night with her, and she is sport for Jove.

Cassio. She 's a most exquisite lady.

Iago. And, I'll warrant her, full of game.

Cassio. Indeed, she 's a most fresh and delicate creature.

Iago. What an eye she has! methinks it sounds a parley to provocation.

Cassio. An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest.

Iago. And when she speaks, is it not an alarum to love?

Cassio. She is indeed perfection.

Iago. Well, happiness to their sheets! Come, lieutenant, I have a stoup of wine; and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants that would fain have a measure to the health of black Othello.

Cassio. Not to-night, good Iago: I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking: I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.

Iago. O! they are our friends; but one cup: I 'll drink for you.

Cassio. I have drunk but one cup to-night, and that was craftily qualified too, and behold what innovation it makes here: I am unfortunate in the infirmity, and dare not task my weakness with any more.

Iago. What, man! 't is a night of revels; the gallants desire it.

Cassio. Where are they?

Iago. Here at the door; I pray you, call them in.

Cassio. I'll do 't; but it dislikes me.

Iago. If I can fasten but one cup upon him,
With that which he hath drunk to-night already,
He 'll be as full of quarrel and offense
As my young mistress' dog. Now, my sick fool, Roderigo,
Whom love has turn'd almost the wrong side out,
To Desdemona hath to-night carous'd
Potations pottle-deep; and he 's to watch.
Three lads of Cyprus, noble swelling spirits,
That hold their honours in a wary distance,
The very elements of this war-like isle,
Have I to-night fluster'd with flowing cups,
And they watch too. Now, 'mongst this flock of drunkards,
Am I to put our Cassio in some action
That may offend the isle. But here they come.
If consequence do but approve my dream,
My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

[*Re-enter* CASSIO, *with* MONTANO *and Gentlemen.*]

CASSIO. Fore God, they have given me a rouse already.

MONTANO. Good faith, a little one; not past a pint as I am a soldier.

IAGO. Some wine, ho!

And let me the canakin clink, clink;
And let me the canakin clink:
A soldier 's a man;
A life 's but a span;
Why then let a soldier drink.

Some wine, boys!

CASSIO. Fore God, an excellent song.

IAGO. I learned it in England, where indeed they are most potent in potting; your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander,—drink, ho!—are nothing to your English.

CASSIO. Is your Englishman so exquisite in his drinking?

IAGO. Why, he drinks you with facility your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next pottle can be filled.

CASSIO. To the health of our general!

MONTANO. I am for it, lieutenant; and I 'll do you justice.

IAGO. O sweet England!

King Stephen was a worthy peer,
His breeches cost him but a crown;
He held them sixpence all too dear,
With that he call'd the tailor lown.
He was a wight of high renown,
And thou art but of low degree:
'T is pride that pulls the country down,
Then take thine auld cloak about thee.

Some wine, ho!

CASSIO. Why, this is a more exquisite song than the other.

IAGO. Will you hear 't again?

CASSIO. No; for I hold him to be unworthy of his place that does those things. Well, God 's above all; and there be souls must be saved, and there be souls must not be saved.

IAGO. It is true, good lieutenant.

CASSIO. For mine own part, no offense to the general, nor any man of quality, I hope to be saved.

IAGO. And so do I too, lieutenant.

CASSIO. Ay; but, by your leave, not before me; the lieutenant is to be saved before the ancient. Let 's have no more of this; Let 's to our affairs. Forgive us our sins! Gentlemen, let 's look to our business. Do not think, gentlemen, I am drunk: this is my ancient; this is my right hand, and this is my left hand. I am not drunk now; I can stand well enough, and speak well enough.

ALL. Excellent well.

CASSIO. Why, very well then; you must not think then that I am drunk. [*Exit.*]

MONTANO. To the platform, masters; come, let 's set the watch.

IAGO. You see this fellow that is gone before;
He is a soldier fit to stand by Cæsar
And give direction; and do but see his vice;
'T is to his virtue a just equinox,
The one as long as the other; 't is pity of him.
I fear the trust Othello puts him in,
On some odd time of his infirmity,
Will shake this island.

MONTANO. But is he often thus?

IAGO. 'T is evermore the prologue to his sleep:
He 'll watch the horologe a double set,
If drink rock not his cradle.

MONTANO. It were well
The general were put in mind of it.
Perhaps he sees it not; or his good nature
Prizes the virtue that appears in Cassio,
And looks not on his evils. Is not this true?

[*Enter* RODERIGO.]

IAGO. [*Aside to him.*] How now, Roderigo!
I pray you, after the lieutenant; go.

[*Exit* RODERIGO.]

MONTANO. And 't is great pity that the noble Moor
Should hazard such a place as his own second
With one of an ingraft infirmity;
It were an honest action to say
So to the Moor.

IAGO. Not I, for this fair island:
I do love Cassio well, and would do much
To cure him of this evil. But hark! what noise?
[*Cry within 'Help! Help!'*]

[*Re-enter* CASSIO, *pursuing* RODERIGO.]

CASSIO. You rogue! you rascal!

MONTANO. What is the matter, lieutenant?

CASSIO. A knave teach me my duty!
I 'll beat the knave into a twiggen bottle.

RODERIGO. Beat me!

CASSIO. Dost thou prate, rogue?
[*Striking* RODERIGO.]

MONTANO. Nay, good lieutenant;
[*Staying him.*]
I pray you, sir, hold your hand.

CASSIO. Let me go, sir,
Or I 'll knock you o'er the mazzard.

MONTANO. Come, come; you 're drunk.

CASSIO. Drunk! [*They fight.*]

IAGO. [*Aside to* RODERIGO.] Away, I say! go out and cry a mutiny!
[*Exit* RODERIGO.]

Nay! good lieutenant! Alas, gentlemen!
Help, ho! Lieutenant! Sir! Montano! Sir!
Help, masters! Here 's a goodly watch indeed! [*Bell rings.*]
Who 's that which rings the bell? *Diablo*, ho!
The town will rise: God's will! lieutenant, hold!
You will be sham'd for ever.

[*Re-enter* OTHELLO *and Attendants.*]

OTHELLO. What is the matter here?

MONTANO. 'Zounds! I bleed still; I am hurt to the death.

OTHELLO. Hold, for your lives!

IAGO. Hold, ho! Lieutenant! Sir! Montano! gentlemen!
Have you forgot all sense of place and duty?
Hold! the general speaks to you; hold, hold for shame!

OTHELLO. Why, how now, ho! from whence ariseth this?
Are we turn'd Turks, and to ourselves do that
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?
For Christian shame put by this barbarous brawl;
He that stirs next to carve for his own rage
Holds his soul light; he dies upon his motion.
Silence the dreadful bell! it frights the isle
From her propriety. What is the matter, masters?
Honest Iago, that look'st dead with grieving,
Speak, who began this? on thy love, I charge thee.

IAGO. I do not know; friends all but now, even now,
In quarter and in terms like bride and groom
Devesting them for bed; and then, but now,
As if some planet had unwitted men,
Swords out, and tilting one at other's breast,
In opposition bloody. I cannot speak
Any beginning to this peevish odds,
And would in action glorious I had lost
Those legs that brought me to a part of it!

OTHELLO. How comes it, Michael, you are thus forgot?

CASSIO. I pray you, pardon me; I cannot speak.

OTHELLO. Worthy Montano, you were wont be civil;
The gravity and stillness of your youth
The world hath noted, and your name is great
In mouths of wisest censure: what's the matter,
That you unlace your reputation thus
And spend your rich opinion for the name
Of a night-brawler? give me answer to it.

MONTANO. Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger;
Your officer, Iago, can inform you,
While I spare speech, which something now offends me,
Of all that I do know; nor know I aught
By me that 's said or done amiss this night,

Unless self-charity be sometime a vice,
And to defend ourselves it be a sin
When violence assails us.

OTHELLO. Now, by heaven,
My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
And passion, having my best judgment, collied,
Assays to lead the way. If I once stir,
Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
Shall sink in my rebuke. Give me to know
How this foul rout began, who set it on;
And he that is approv'd in this offense,
Though he had twinn'd with me, both at a birth,
Shall lose me. What! in a town of war,
Yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear,
To manage private and domestic quarrel,
In night, and on the court and guard of safety!
'T is monstrous. Iago, who began 't?

MONTANO. If partially affin'd, or leagu'd in office,
Thou dost deliver more or less than truth,
Thou art no soldier.

IAGO. Touch me not so near;
I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth
Than it should do offense to Michael Cassio;
Yet, I persuade myself, to speak the truth
Shall nothing wrong him. Thus it is, general.
Montano and myself being in speech,
There comes a fellow crying out for help,
And Cassio following him with determin'd sword
To execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman
Steps in to Cassio, and entreats his pause;
Myself the crying fellow did pursue,
Lest by his clamour, as it so fell out,
The town might fall in fright; he, swift of foot,
Outran my purpose, and I return'd the rather
For that I heard the clink and fall of swords,
And Cassio high in oath, which till to-night
I ne'er might say before. When I came back,

For this was brief, I found them close together,
At blow and thrust, even as again they were
When you yourself did part them.
More of this matter can I not report:
But men are men; the best sometimes forget:
Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,
As men in rage strike those that wish them best,
Yet surely Cassio, I believe, receiv'd
From him that fled some strange indignity,
Which patience could not pass.

OTHELLO. I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,
Making it light to Cassio. Cassio, I love thee;
But never more be officer of mine.

[*Re-enter* DESDEMONA, *attended.*]

Look! if my gentle love be not rais'd up;
I 'll make thee an example.

DESDEMONA. What's the matter?

OTHELLO. All 's well now, sweeting; come away to bed.
Sir, for your hurts, myself will be your surgeon.
Lead him off. [MONTANO *is led off.*]
Iago, look with care about the town,
And silence those whom this vile brawl distracted.
Come, Desdemona; 't is the soldiers' life
To have their balmy slumbers wak'd with strife.

[*Exeunt all but* IAGO *and* CASSIO.]

IAGO. What! are you hurt, lieutenant?

CASSIO. Ay; past all surgery.

IAGO. Marry, heaven forbid!

CASSIO. Reputation, reputation, reputation! O! I have lost my reputation. I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

IAGO. As I am an honest man, I thought you had received some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than in reputation. Reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft

got without merit, and lost without deserving: you have lost no reputation at all, unless you repute yourself such a loser. What! man; there are ways to recover the general again; you are but now cast in his mood, a punishment more in policy than in malice; even so as one would beat his offenseless dog to affright an imperious lion. Sue to him again, and he 's yours.

Cassio. I will rather sue to be despised than to deceive so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so indiscreet an officer. Drunk! and speak parrot! and squabble, swagger, swear, and discourse fustian with one's own shadow! O thou invisible spirit of wine! if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil.

Iago. What was he that you followed with your sword? What had he done to you?

Cassio. I know not.

Iago. Is 't possible?

Cassio. I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly; a quarrel, but nothing wherefore. O God! that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains; that we should, with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts.

Iago. Why, but you are now well enough; how came you thus recovered?

Cassio. It hath pleased the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath; one unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself.

Iago. Come, you are too severe a moraler. As the time, the place, and the condition of this country stands, I could heartily wish this had not befallen, but since it is as it is, mend if for your own good.

Cassio. I will ask him for my place again; he shall tell me I am a drunkard! Had I as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange! Every inordinate cup is unblessed and the ingredient is a devil.

Iago. Come, come; good wine is a good familiar creature

if it be well used; exclaim no more against it. And, good lieutenant, I think you think I love you.

Cassio. I have well approved it, sir. I drunk!

Iago. You or any man living may be drunk at a time, man. I 'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general: I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her parts and graces: confess yourself freely to her; importune her help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, that she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter; and my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before.

Cassio. You advise me well.

Iago. I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.

Cassio. I think it freely; and betimes in the morning I will beseech the virtuous Desdemona to undertake for me. I am desperate of my fortunes if they check me here.

Iago. You are in the right. Good night, lieutenant; I must to the watch.

Cassio. Good night, honest Iago! [*Exit.*]

Iago. And what 's he then that says I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 't is most easy
The inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit; she 's fram'd as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor, were 't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
His soul is so enfetter'd to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain:
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,

Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will their blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now; for whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I 'll pour this pestilence into his ear,
That she repeals him for her body's lust;
And, by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all.

[*Re-enter* RODERIGO.]

How now, Roderigo!

RODERIGO. I do follow here in the chase, not like a hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry. My money is almost spent; I have been to-night exceedingly well cudgeled; and I think the issue will be, I shall have so much experience for my pains; and so, with no money at all and a little more wit, return again to Venice.

IAGO. How poor are they that have not patience!
What wound did ever heal but by degrees?
Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,
And wit depends on dilatory time.
Does 't not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee,
And thou, by that small hurt, hast cashier'd Cassio.
Though other things grow fair against the sun,
Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe:
Content thyself awhile. By the mass, 't is morning;
Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.
Retire thee; go where thou art billeted:
Away, I say; thou shalt know more hereafter:
Nay, get thee gone. [*Exit* RODERIGO.]
Two things are to be done;
My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress;

I 'll set her on;
Myself the while to draw the Moor apart,
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find
Soliciting his wife: ay, that 's the way:
Dull not device by coldness and delay. [*Exit.*]

ACT III

Scene I.—*Cyprus. Before the Castle.*

[*Enter* Cassio *and some Musicians.*]

Cassio. Masters, play here; I will content your pains;
Something that 's brief; and bid 'Good morrow, general.'

[*Music.*]

[*Enter Clown.*]

Clown. Why, masters, have your instruments been in Naples, that they speak i' the nose thus?

First Musician. How, sir, how?

Clown. Are these, I pray you, wind-instruments?

First Musician. Ay, marry, are they, sir.

Clown. O! thereby hangs a tail.

First Musician. Whereby hangs a tale, sir?

Clown. Marry, sir, by many a wind-instrument that I know. But, masters, here 's money for you; and the general so likes your music, that he desires you, for love's sake, to make no more noise with it.

First Musician. Well, sir, we will not.

Clown. If you have any music that may not be heard, to 't again; but, as they say, to hear music the general does not greatly care.

First Musician. We have none such, sir.

Clown. Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I 'll away. Go; vanish into air; away!

[*Exeunt Musicians.*]

CASSIO. Dost thou hear, mine honest friend?

CLOWN. No, I hear not your honest friend; I hear you.

CASSIO. Prithee, keep up thy quillets. There 's a poor piece of gold for thee. If the gentlewoman that attends the general's wife be stirring, tell her there 's one Cassio entreats her a little favour of speech: wilt thou do this?

CLOWN. She is stirring, sir: if she will stir hither, I shall seem to notify unto her.

CASSIO. Do, good my friend. [*Exit Clown.*]

[*Enter* IAGO.]

In happy time, Iago.

IAGO. You have not been a-bed, then?

CASSIO. Why, no; the day had broke
Before we parted. I have made bold, Iago,
To send in to your wife; my suit to her
Is, that she will to virtuous Desdemona
Procure me some access.

IAGO. I 'll send her to you presently;
And I 'll devise a mean to draw the Moor
Out of the way, that your converse and business
May be more free.

CASSIO. I humbly thank you for 't.

[*Exit* IAGO.]

I never knew
A Florentine more kind and honest.

[*Enter* EMILIA.]

EMILIA. Good morrow, good lieutenant: I am sorry
For your displeasure; but all will sure be well.
The general and his wife are talking of it,
And she speaks for you stoutly: the Moor replies
That he you hurt is of great fame in Cyprus
And great affinity, and that in wholesome wisdom
He might not but refuse you; but he protests he loves you,
And needs no other suitor but his likings
To take the saf'st occasion by the front
To bring you in again.

CASSIO. Yet, I beseech you,
If you think fit, or that it may be done,
Give me advantage of some brief discourse
With Desdemona alone.
EMILIA. Pray you, come in:
I will bestow you where you shall have time
To speak your bosom freely.
CASSIO. I am much bound to you.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Castle.*

[*Enter* OTHELLO, IAGO, *and Gentlemen.*]

OTHELLO. These letters give, Iago, to the pilot,
And by him do my duties to the senate;
That done, I will be walking on the works;
Repair there to me.
IAGO. Well, my good lord, I 'll do 't.
OTHELLO. This fortification, gentlemen, shall we see 't?
GENTLEMEN. We 'll wait upon your lordship.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*The Garden of the Castle.*

[*Enter* DESDEMONA, CASSIO, *and* EMILIA.]

DESDEMONA. Be thou assur'd, good Cassio, I will do
All my abilities in thy behalf.
EMILIA. Good madam, do: I warrant it grieves my husband,
As if the cause were his.
DESDEMONA. O! that 's an honest fellow. Do not doubt, Cassio,
But I will have my lord and you again
As friendly as you were.
CASSIO. Bounteous madam,
Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio,
He 's never any thing but your true servant.

DESDEMONA. I know 't; I thank you. You do love my lord;
You have known him long; and be you well assur'd
He shall in strangeness stand no further off
Than in a politic distance.

CASSIO. Ay, but, lady,
That policy may either last so long,
Or feed upon such nice and waterish diet,
Or breed itself so out of circumstance,
That, I being absent and my place supplied,
My general will forget my love and service.

DESDEMONA. Do not doubt that; before Emilia here
I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,
If I do vow a friendship, I 'll perform it
To the last article; my lord shall never rest;
I 'll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience;
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
I 'll intermingle every thing he does
With Cassio's suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio;
For thy solicitor shall rather die
Than give thy cause away.

[*Enter* OTHELLO *and* IAGO, *at a distance.*]

EMILIA. Madam, here comes my lord.

CASSIO. Madam, I 'll take my leave.

DESDEMONA. Why, stay, and hear me speak.

CASSIO. Madam, not now; I am very ill at ease,
Unfit for mine own purposes.

DESDEMONA. Well, do your discretion.

[*Exit* CASSIO.]

IAGO. Ha! I like not that.

OTHELLO. What dost thou say?

IAGO. Nothing, my lord: or if—I know not what.

OTHELLO. Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?

IAGO. Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it
That he would steal away so guilty-like,
Seeing you coming.

OTHELLO. I do believe 't was he.

DESDEMONA. How now, my lord!
I have been talking with a suitor here,
A man that languishes in your displeasure.
OTHELLO. Who is 't you mean?
DESDEMONA. Why, your lieutenant, Cassio. Good my lord,
If I have any grace or power to move you,
His present reconciliation take;
For if he be not one that truly loves you,
That errs in ignorance and not in cunning,
I have no judgment in an honest face.
I prithee call him back.
OTHELLO. Went he hence now?
DESDEMONA. Ay, sooth; so humbled
That he hath left part of his grief with me,
To suffer with him. Good love, call him back.
OTHELLO. Not now, sweet Desdemona; some other time.
DESDEMONA. But shall 't be shortly?
OTHELLO. The sooner, sweet, for you.
DESDEMONA. Shall 't be to-night at supper?
OTHELLO. No, not to-night.
DESDEMONA. To-morrow dinner then?
OTHELLO. I shall not dine at home;
I meet the captains at the citadel.
DESDEMONA. Why, then, to-morrow night; or Tuesday morn;
On Tuesday noon, or night; on Wednesday morn:
I prithee name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days: in faith, he's penitent;
And yet his trespass, in our common reason,
Save that they say the wars must make examples
Out of the best, is not almost a fault
To incur a private check. When shall he come?
Tell me, Othello. I wonder in my soul,
What you could ask me that I should deny,
Or stand so mammering on. What! Michael Cassio,
That came a-wooing with you, and so many a time,
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,

Hath ta'en your part; to have so much to do
To bring him in! Trust me, I could do much—

OTHELLO. Prithee, no more; let him come when he will;
I will deny thee nothing.

DESDEMONA. Why, this it not a boon;
'T is as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
To your own person; nay, when I have a suit
Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,
It shall be full of poise and difficult weight,
And fearful to be granted.

OTHELLO. I will deny thee nothing:
Whereon, I do beseech thee, grant me this,
To leave me but a little to myself.

DESDEMONA. Shall I deny you? no: farewell, my lord.

OTHELLO. Farewell, my Desdemona: I 'll come to thee straight.

DESDEMONA. Emilia, come. Be as your fancies teach you;
What'er you be, I am obedient.

[*Exit, with* EMILIA.]

OTHELLO. Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

IAGO. My noble lord,—

OTHELLO. What dost thou say, Iago?

IAGO. Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
Know of your love?

OTHELLO. He did, from first to last: why dost thou ask?

IAGO. But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.

OTHELLO. Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO. I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

OTHELLO. O! yes; and went between us very oft.

IAGO. Indeed!

OTHELLO. Indeed! ay, indeed; discern'st thou aught in that?
Is he not honest?

IAGO. Honest, my lord!
OTHELLO. Honest! ay, honest.
IAGO. My lord, for aught I know.
OTHELLO. What dost thou think?
IAGO. Think, my lord!
OTHELLO. Think, my lord!
By heaven, he echoes me,
As if there were some monster in his thought
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:
I heard thee say even now, thou lik'dst not that,
When Cassio left my wife; what didst not like?
And when I told thee he was of my counsel
In my whole course of wooing, thou cried'st 'Indeed!'
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought.
IAGO. My lord, you know I love you.
OTHELLO. I think thou dóst;
And, for I know thou art full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more;
For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of custom, but in a man that 's just
They 're close delations, working from the heart
That passion cannot rule.
IAGO. For Michael Cassio,
I dare be sworn I think that he is honest.
OTHELLO. I think so too.
IAGO. Men should be what they seem;
Or those that be not, would they might seem none!
OTHELLO. Certain, men should be what they seem.
IAGO. Why then, I think Cassio's an honest man.
OTHELLO. Nay, yet there 's more in this.
I pray thee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.

IAGO. Good my lord, pardon me;
Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that all slaves are free to.
Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false;
As where 's that palace whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not? who has a breast so pure
But some uncleanly apprehensions
Keep leets and law-days, and in session sit
With meditations lawful?

OTHELLO. Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
If thou but think'st him wrong'd, and mak'st his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.

IAGO. I do beseech you,
Though I perchance am vicious in my guess,
As, I confess, it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
Shapes faults that are not, that your wisdom yet,
From one that so imperfectly conceits,
Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble
Out of his scattering and unsure observance.
It were not for your quiet nor your good,
Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

OTHELLO. What dost thou mean?

IAGO. Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash; 't is something, nothing;
'T was mine, 't is his, and has been slave to thousands:
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

OTHELLO. By heaven, I 'll know thy thoughts.

IAGO. You cannot, if my heart were in your hand;
Nor shall not, whilst 't is in my custody.

OTHELLO. Ha!

IAGO. O! beware, my lord, of jealousy;
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock

The meat it feeds on; that cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But, O! what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet soundly loves.

OTHELLO. O misery!

IAGO. Poor and content is rich and rich enough,
But riches fineless is as poor as winter
To him that ever fears he shall be poor.
Good heaven, the souls of all my tribe defend
From jealousy!

OTHELLO. Why, why is this?
Think'st thou I 'd make a life of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No; to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolv'd. Exchange me for a goat
When I shall turn the business of my soul
To such exsufflicate and blown surmises,
Matching thy inference. 'T is not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous:
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago,
I 'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof there is no more but this,
Away at once with love or jealousy!

IAGO. I am glad of it; for now I shall have reason
To show the love and duty that I bear you
With franker spirit; therefore, as I am bound,
Receive it from me. I speak not yet of proof.
Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio;
Wear your eye thus, not jealous nor secure:
I would not have your free and noble nature
Out of self-bounty be abus'd; look to 't.
I know our country disposition well;
In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks

They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave 't undone, but keep 't unknown.

OTHELLO. Dost thou say so?

IAGO. She did deceive her father, marrying you;
And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks
She lov'd them most.

OTHELLO. And so she did.

IAGO. Why, go to, then;
She that so young could give out such a seeming,
To seel her father's eyes up close as oak,
He thought 't was witchcraft; but I am much to blame;
I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
For too much loving you.

OTHELLO. I am bound to thee for ever.

IAGO. I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits.

OTHELLO. Not a jot, not a jot.

IAGO. I' faith, I fear it has.
I hope you will consider what is spoke
Comes from my love. But I do see you 're mov'd;
I am to pray you not to strain my speech
To grosser issues nor to larger reach
Than to suspicion.

OTHELLO. I will not.

IAGO. Should you do so, my lord,
My speech should fall into such vile success
As my thoughts aim not at. Cassio 's my worthy friend—
My lord, I see you 're mov'd.

OTHELLO. No, not much mov'd:
I do not think but Desdemona's honest.

IAGO. Long live she so! and long live you to think so!

OTHELLO. And yet, how nature erring from itself,—

IAGO. Ay, there 's the point: as, to be bold with you,
Not to affect many proposed matches
Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
Whereto we see in all things nature tends;
Foh! one may smell, in such, a will most rank,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.

But pardon me; I do not in position
Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
May fall to match you with her country forms
And happily repent.

OTHELLO. Farewell, farewell:
If more thou dost perceive, let me know more;
Set on thy wife to observe. Leave me, Iago.

IAGO. My lord, I take my leave. [*Going.*]

OTHELLO. Why did I marry? This honest creature, doubtless,
Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds.

IAGO. [*Returning.*] My lord, I would I might entreat your honour
To scan this thing no further; leave it to time.
Although 't is fit that Cassio have his place,
For sure he fills it up with great ability,
Yet, if you please to hold him off awhile,
You shall by that perceive him and his means:
Note if your lady strain his entertainment
With any strong or vehement importunity;
Much will be seen in that. In the meantime,
Let me be thought too busy in my fears,
As worthy cause I have to fear I am,
And hold her free, I do beseech your honour.

OTHELLO. Fear not my government.

IAGO. I once more take my leave. [*Exit.*]

OTHELLO. This fellow 's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,
Of human dealings; if I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings,
I 'd whistle her off and let her down the wind,
To prey at fortune. Haply, for I am black
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years, yet that 's not much,
She 's gone. I am abus'd; and my relief

Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage!
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites. I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. Yet, 't is the plague of great ones;
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base;
'T is destiny unshunnable, like death:
Even then this forked plague is fated to us
When we do quicken. Look! Desdemona comes.
If she be false, O! then heaven mocks itself.
I 'll not believe 't.

[*Re-enter* Desdemona *and* Emilia.]

Desdemona. How now, my dear Othello!
Your dinner and the generous islanders
By you invited, do attend your presence.

Othello. I am to blame.

Desdemona. Why do you speak so faintly?
Are you not well?

Othello. I have a pain upon my forehead here.

Desdemona. Faith, that 's with watching; 't will away again:
Let me but bind it hard, within this hour
It will be well.

Othello. Your napkin is too little:

[*She drops her handkerchief.*]

Let it alone. Come, I 'll go in with you.

Desdemona. I am very sorry that you are not well.

[*Exeunt* Othello *and* Desdemona.]

Emilia. I am glad I have found this napkin;
This was her first remembrance from the Moor;
My wayward husband hath a hundred times
Woo'd me to steal it, but she so loves the token,
For he conjur'd her she should ever keep it,
That she reserves it evermore about her

To kiss and talk to. I 'll have the work ta'en out
And give 't Iago:
What he will do with it heaven knows, not I;
I nothing but to please his fantasy.

[*Re-enter* IAGO.]

IAGO. How now! what do you here alone?
EMILIA. Do not you chide; I have a thing for you.
IAGO. A thing for me? it is a common thing—
EMILIA. Ha!
IAGO. To have a foolish wife.
EMILIA. O! is that all? What will you give me now
For that same handkerchief?
IAGO. What handkerchief?
EMILIA. What handkerchief!
Why, that the Moor first gave to Desdemona;
That which so often you did bid me steal.
IAGO. Hast stol'n it from her?
EMILIA. No faith; she let it drop by negligence,
And, to the advantage, I, being here, took 't up.
Look, here it is.
IAGO. A good wench; give it me.
EMILIA. What will you do with 't, that you have been so earnest
To have me filch it?
IAGO. Why, what's that to you?
[*Snatches it.*]
EMILIA. If it be not for some purpose of import
Give 't me again; poor lady! she 'll run mad
When she shall lack it.
IAGO. Be not acknown on 't; I have use for it.
Go, leave me. [*Exit* EMILIA.]
I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,
And let him find it; trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ; this may do something.
The Moor already changes with my poison:

Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But with a little act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur. I did say so:
Look! where he comes.

[*Re-enter* OTHELLO.]

Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou ow'dst yesterday.

OTHELLO. Ha! ha! false to me?

IAGO. Why, how now, general! no more of that.

OTHELLO. Avaunt! be gone! thou hast set me on the rack;
I swear 't is better to be much abus'd
Than but to know 't a little.

IAGO. How now, my lord!

OTHELLO. What sense had I of her stol'n hours of lust?
I saw 't not, thought it not, it harm'd not me;
I slept the next night well, was free and merry;
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips;
He that is robb'd, not wanting what is stol'n,
Let him not know 't and he 's not robb'd at all.

IAGO. I am sorry to hear this.

OTHELLO. I had been happy, if the general camp,
Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. O! now, for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind; farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation 's gone!

IAGO. Is 't possible, my lord?
OTHELLO. Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof;
Or, by the worth of mine eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my wak'd wrath.
IAGO. Is 't come to this?
OTHELLO. Make me to see 't; or, at the least, so prove it,
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop
To hang a doubt on; or woe upon thy life!
IAGO. My noble lord,—
OTHELLO. If thou dost slander her and torture me,
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;
On horror's head horrors accumulate;
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amaz'd;
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than that.
IAGO. O grace! O heaven forgive me!
Are you a man? have you a soul or sense?
God be wi' you; take mine office. O wretched fool!
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice.
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world!
To be direct and honest is not safe.
I thank you for this profit, and from hence
I 'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offense.
OTHELLO. Nay, stay; thou should'st be honest.
IAGO. I should be wise; for honesty 's a fool,
And loses that it works for.
OTHELLO. By the world,
I think my wife be honest and think she is not;
I think that thou art just and think thou art not.
I 'll have some proof. Her name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black
As mine own face. If there be cords or knives,
Poison or fire or suffocating streams,
I 'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!
IAGO. I see, sir, you are eaten up with passion.

I do repent me that I put it to you.
You would be satisfied?
OTHELLO. Would! nay, I will.
IAGO. And may; but how? how satisfied, my lord?
Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on;
Behold her tupp'd?
OTHELLO. Death and damnation! O!
IAGO. It were a tedious difficulty, I think,
To bring them to that prospect; damn them then
If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster
More than their own! What then? how then?
What shall I say? Where's satisfaction?
It is impossible you should see this,
Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross
As ignorance made drunk; but yet, I say,
If imputation and strong circumstances,
Which lead directly to the door of truth,
Will give you satisfaction, you might have 't.
OTHELLO. Give me a living reason she 's disloyal.
IAGO. I do not like the office;
But, sith I am enter'd in this cause so far,
Prick'd to 't by foolish honesty and love,
I will go on. I lay with Cassio lately;
And, being troubled with a raging tooth,
I could not sleep.
There are a kind of men so loose of soul
That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs;
One of this kind is Cassio.
In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves!'
And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard,
As if he pluck'd up kisses by the roots,
That grew upon my lips; then laid his leg
Over my thigh, and sigh'd, and kiss'd; and then
Cried 'Cursed fate that gave thee to the Moor!'

OTHELLO. O monstrous! monstrous!
IAGO. Nay, this was but his dream.
OTHELLO. But this denoted a foregone conclusion:
'T is a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream.
IAGO. And this may help to thicken other proofs
That do demonstrate thinly.
OTHELLO. I 'll tear her all to pieces.
IAGO. Nay, but be wise; yet we see nothing done;
She may be honest yet. Tell me but this:
Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief
Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?
OTHELLO. I gave her such a one; 't was my first gift.
IAGO. I know not that; but such a handkerchief,
I am sure it was your wife's, did I to-day
See Cassio wipe his beard with.
OTHELLO. If it be that,—
IAGO. If it be that, or any that was hers,
It speaks against her with the other proofs.
OTHELLO. O! that the slave had forty thousand lives;
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.
Now do I see 't is true. Look here, Iago;
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven:
'T is gone.
Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell!
Yield up, O love! thy crown and hearted throne
To tyrannous hate. Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
For 't is of aspics' tongues!
IAGO. Yet be content.
OTHELLO. O! blood, blood, blood!
IAGO. Patience, I say; your mind perhaps may change.
OTHELLO. Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,

Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up. [*Kneels.*]
Now, by yond marble heaven,
In the due reverence of a sacred vow
I here engage my words.

IAGO. Do not rise yet. [*Kneels.*]
Witness, you ever-burning lights above!
You elements that clip us round about!
Witness that here Iago doth give up
The execution of his wit, hands, heart,
To wrong'd Othello's service! Let him command,
And to obey shall be in me remorse,
What bloody business ever.

OTHELLO. I greet thy love,
Not with vain thanks, but with acceptance bounteous,
And will upon the instant put thee to 't:
Within these three days let me hear thee say
That Cassio 's not alive.

IAGO. My friend is dead; 't is done at your request:
But let her live.

OTHELLO. Damn her, lewd minx! O! damn her.
Come, go with me apart; I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil. Now art thou my lieutenant.

IAGO. I am your own for ever. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Before the Castle.*

[*Enter* DESDEMONA, EMILIA, *and Clown.*]

DESDEMONA. Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?

CLOWN. I dare not say he lies any where.

DESDEMONA. Why, man?

CLOWN. He 's a soldier; and for one to say a soldier lies, is stabbing.

DESDEMONA. Go to; where lodges he?

CLOWN. To tell you where he lodges is to tell you where I lie.

DESDEMONA. Can any thing be made of this?

CLOWN. I know not where he lodges, and for me to devise a lodging, and say he lies here or he lies there, were to lie in mine own throat.

DESDEMONA. Can you inquire him out, and be edified by report?

CLOWN. I will catechize the world for him; that is, make questions, and by them answer.

DESDEMONA. Seek him, bid him come hither; tell him I have moved my lord in his behalf, and hope all will be well.

CLOWN. To do this is within the compass of man's wit, and therefore I will attempt the doing it. [*Exit.*]

DESDEMONA. Where should I lose that handkerchief, Emilia?

EMILIA. I know not, madam.

DESDEMONA. Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse
Full of cruzadoes; and, but my noble Moor
Is true of mind and made of no such baseness
As jealous creatures are, it were enough
To put him to ill thinking.

EMILIA. Is he not jealous?

DESDEMONA. Who? he! I think the sun where he was born
Drew all such humours from him.

EMILIA. Look! where he comes.

DESDEMONA. I will not leave him now till Cassio
Be call'd to him.

[*Enter* OTHELLO.]

How is 't with you, my lord?

OTHELLO. Well, my good lady. [*Aside.*] O! hardness to dissemble.
How do you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA. Well, my good lord,

OTHELLO. Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.

DESDEMONA. It yet has felt no age nor known no sorrow.
OTHELLO. This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart;
Hot, hot, and moist; this hand of yours requires
A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
Much castigation, exercise devout;
For here 's a young and sweating devil here,
That commonly rebels. 'T is a good hand,
A frank one.
DESDEMONA. You may, indeed, say so;
For 't was that hand that gave away my heart.
OTHELLO. A liberal hand; the hearts of old gave hands,
But our new heraldry is hands not hearts.
DESDEMONA. I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise.
OTHELLO. What promise, chuck?
DESDEMONA. I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.
OTHELLO. I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me.
Lend me thy handkerchief.
DESDEMONA. Here, my lord.
OTHELLO. That which I gave you.
DESDEMONA. I have it not about me.
OTHELLO. Not?
DESDEMONA. No, indeed, my lord.
OTHELLO. That is a fault.
That handkerchief
Did an Egyptian to my mother give;
She was a charmer, and could almost read
The thoughts of people; she told her, while she kept it,
'T would make her amiable and subdue my father
Entirely to her love, but if she lost it
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt
After new fancies. She dying gave it me;
And bid me, when my fate would have me wive,
To give it her. I did so: and take heed on 't;
Make it a darling like your precious eye;

To lose 't or give 't away were such perdition
As nothing else could match.
DESDEMONA. Is 't possible?
OTHELLO. 'T is true; there 's magic in the web of it;
A sibyl, that had number'd in the world
The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work;
The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk,
And it was dy'd in mummy which the skilful
Conserv'd of maidens' hearts.
DESDEMONA. Indeed! is 't true?
OTHELLO. Most veritable; therefore look to 't well.
DESDEMONA. Then would to God that I had never seen 't!
OTHELLO. Ha! wherefore?
DESDEMONA. Why do you speak so startingly and rash?
OTHELLO. Is 't lost? is 't gone? speak, is it out o' the way?
DESDEMONA. Heaven bless us!
OTHELLO. Say you?
DESDEMONA. It is not lost; but what an if it were?
OTHELLO. How!
DESDEMONA. I say it is not lost.
OTHELLO. Fetch 't, let me see 't.
DESDEMONA. Why, so I can, sir, but I will not now.
This is a trick to put me from my suit:
Pray you let Cassio be receiv'd again.
OTHELLO. Fetch me the handkerchief; my mind misgives.
DESDEMONA. Come, come;
You 'll never meet a more sufficient man.
OTHELLO. The handkerchief!
DESDEMONA. I pray, talk me of Cassio.
OTHELLO. The handkerchief!
DESDEMONA. A man that all his time
Hath founded his good fortunes on your love,
Shar'd dangers with you,—
OTHELLO. The handkerchief!
DESDEMONA. In sooth, you are to blame.
OTHELLO. Away! [*Exit.*]

EMILIA. Is not this man jealous?
DESDEMONA. I ne'er saw this before.
Sure, there 's some wonder in this handkerchief;
I am most unhappy in the loss of it.
EMILIA. 'T is not a year or two shows us a man:
They are all but stomachs, and we all but food:
They eat us hungerly, and when they are full
They belch us. Look you! Cassio and my husband.

[*Enter* IAGO *and* CASSIO.]

IAGO. There is no other way; 't is she must do 't:
And, lo! the happiness: go and importune her.
DESDEMONA. How now, good Cassio! what 's the news with you?
CASSIO. Madam, my former suit: I do beseech you
That by your virtuous means I may again
Exist, and be a member of his love
Whom I with all the office of my heart
Entirely honour; I would not be delay'd.
If my offense be of such mortal kind
That nor my service past, nor present sorrows,
Nor purpos'd merit in futurity,
Can ransom me into his love again,
But to know so must be my benefit;
So shall I clothe me in a forc'd content,
And shut myself up in some other course
To fortune's alms.
DESDEMONA. Alas! thrice-gentle Cassio,
My advocation is not now in tune;
My lord is not my lord; nor should I know him,
Were he in favour as in humour alter'd.
So help me every spirit sanctified,
As I have spoken for you all my best
And stood within the blank of his displeasure
For my free speech. You must awhile be patient;
What I can do I will, and more I will
Than for myself I dare; let that suffice you.

IAGO. Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon,
EMILIA. He went hence but now,
And certainly in strange unquietness.
IAGO. Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon,
When it hath blown his ranks into the air,
And, like the devil, from his very arm
Puff'd his own brother; and can he be angry?
Something of moment then; I will go meet him;
There 's matter in 't indeed, if he be angry.
DESDEMONA. I prithee, do so. [*Exit* IAGO.]
Something, sure, of state,
Either from Venice, or some unhatch'd practice
Made demonstrable here in Cyprus to him,
Hath puddled his clear spirit; and in such cases
Men's natures wrangle with inferior things,
Though great ones are their object. 'T is even so;
For let our finger ache, and it indues
Our other healthful members ev'n to that sense
Of pain. Nay, we must think men are not gods,
Nor of them look for such observancy
As fits the bridal. Beshrew me much, Emilia,
I was, unhandsome warrior as I am,
Arraigning his unkindness with my soul;
But now I find I had suborn'd the witness,
And he 's indicted falsely.
EMILIA. Pray heaven it be state-matters, as you think,
And no conception nor no jealous toy
Concerning you.
DESDEMONA. Alas the day! I never gave him cause.
EMILIA. But jealous souls will not be answer'd so;
They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous; 't is a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself.
DESDEMONA. Heaven keep that monster from Othello's mind!
EMILIA. Lady, amen.
DESDEMONA. I will go seek him. Cassio, walk hereabout;

If I do find him fit, I 'll move your suit
And seek to effect it to my uttermost.
CASSIO. I humbly thank your ladyship.

[*Exeunt* DESDEMONA *and* EMILIA.]

[*Enter* BIANCA.]

BIANCA. Save you, friend Cassio!
CASSIO. What make you from home?
How is it with you, my most fair Bianca?
I' faith, sweet love, I was coming to your house.
BIANCA. And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.
What! keep a week away? seven days and nights?
Eight score eight hours? and lovers' absent hours,
More tedious than the dial eight score times?
O weary reckoning!
CASSIO. Pardon me, Bianca;
I have this while with leaden thoughts been press'd,
But I shall, in a more continuate time,
Strike off this score of absence. Sweet Bianca,
[*Giving her* DESDEMONA'S *handkerchief.*]
Take me this work out.
BIANCA. O Cassio! whence came this?
This is some token from a newer friend;
To the felt absence now I feel a cause;
Is it come to this? Well, well.
CASSIO. Go to, woman!
Throw your vile guesses in the devil's teeth,
From whence you have them. You are jealous now
That this is from some mistress, some remembrance:
No, in good troth, Bianca.
BIANCA. Why, whose is it?
CASSIO. I know not, sweet; I found it in my chamber.
I like the work well; ere it be demanded,
As like enough it will, I 'd have it copied;
Take it and do 't, and leave me for this time.
BIANCA. Leave you! wherefore?
CASSIO. I do attend here on the general,

And think it no addition nor my wish
To have him see me woman'd.
BIANCA. Why, I pray you?
CASSIO. Not that I love you not.
BIANCA. But that you do not love me.
I pray you, bring me on the way a little,
And say if I shall see you soon at night.
CASSIO. 'T is but a little way that I can bring you,
For I attend here; but I 'll see you soon.
BIANCA. 'T is very good; I must be circumstanc'd.
[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*Cyprus. Before the Castle.*

[*Enter* OTHELLO *and* IAGO.]

IAGO. Will you think so?
OTHELLO. Think so, Iago!
IAGO. What!
To kiss in private?
OTHELLO. An unauthoriz'd kiss.
IAGO. Or to be naked with her friend a-bed,
An hour or more, not meaning any harm?
OTHELLO. Naked a-bed, Iago, and not mean harm?
It is hypocrisy against the devil:
They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.
IAGO. If they do nothing, 't is a venial slip;
But if I give my wife a handkerchief,—
OTHELLO. What then?
IAGO. Why, then, 't is hers, my lord; and, being hers,
She may, I think, bestow 't on any man.
OTHELLO. She is protectress of her honour too;
May she give that?
IAGO. Her honour is an essence that 's not seen;

They have it very oft that have it not:
But for the handkerchief,—

OTHELLO. By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it.
Thou said'st,—O! it comes o'er my memory,
As doth the raven o'er the infected house,
Boding to all,—he had my handkerchief.

IAGO. Ay, what of that?

OTHELLO. That 's not so good now.

IAGO. What
If I had said I had seen him do you wrong?
Or heard him say, as knaves be such abroad,
Who having, by their own importunate suit,
Or voluntary dotage of some mistress,
Convinced or supplied them, cannot choose
But they must blab.

OTHELLO. Hath he said any thing?

IAGO. He hath, my lord; but be you well assur'd,
No more than he 'll unswear.

OTHELLO. What hath he said?

IAGO. Faith, that he did—I know not what he did.

OTHELLO. What? what?

IAGO. Lie—

OTHELLO. With her?

IAGO. With her, on her; what you will.

OTHELLO. Lie with her! lie on her! We say lie on her when they belie her. Lie with her! that 's fulsome. Handkerchief,—confessions,—handkerchief. To confess, and be hanged for his labour. First, to be hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is 't possible? Confess!—Handkerchief!—O devil!

[*Falls in a trance.*]

IAGO. Work on.
My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught;
And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,

All guiltless, meet reproach. What, ho! my lord!
My lord, I say! Othello!

[*Enter* CASSIO.]

How now, Cassio!

CASSIO. What 's the matter?

IAGO. My lord is fall'n into an epilepsy;
This is his second fit; he had one yesterday.

CASSIO. Rub him about the temples.

IAGO. No, forbear;
The lethargy must have his quiet course,
If not he foams at mouth, and by and by
Breaks out to savage madness. Look! he stirs;
Do you withdraw yourself a little while,
He will recover straight; when he is gone,
I would on great occasion speak with you. [*Exit* CASSIO.]
How is it, general? have you hurt your head?

OTHELLO. Dost thou mock me?

IAGO. I mock you! no, by heaven.
Would you would bear your fortune like a man!

OTHELLO. A horned man's a monster and a beast.

IAGO. There's many a beast then in a populous city,
And many a civil monster.

OTHELLO. Did he confess it?

IAGO. Good sir, be a man;
Think every bearded fellow that's but yok'd
May draw with you; there's millions now alive
That nightly lie in those unproper beds
Which they dare swear peculiar; your case is better
O! 'tis the spite of hell, the fiend's archmock,
To lip a wanton in a secure couch,
And to suppose her chaste. No, let me know;
And knowing what I am I know what she shall be.

OTHELLO. O! thou art wise; 'tis certain.

IAGO. Stand you awhile apart;
Confine yourself but in a patient list.
Whilst you were here overwhelmed with your grief,

A passion most unsuiting such a man,
Cassio came hither; I shifted him away,
And laid good 'scuse upon your ecstasy;
Bade him anon return and here speak with me;
The which he promis'd. Do but encave yourself,
And mark the fleers, the gibes, and notable scorns,
That dwell in every region of his face;
For I will make him tell the tale anew,
Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when
He hath, and is again to cope your wife:
I say, but mark his gesture. Marry, patience;
Or I shall say you are all in all in spleen,
And nothing of a man.

OTHELLO. Dost thou hear, Iago?
I will be found most cunning in my patience;
But, dost thou hear? most bloody.

IAGO. That's not amiss;
But yet keep time in all. Will you withdraw?

[OTHELLO *goes apart.*]

Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,
A housewife that by selling her desires
Buys herself bread and clothes; it is a creature
That dotes on Cassio; as 't is the strumpets' plague
To beguile many and be beguil'd by one.
He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain
From the excess of laughter. Here he comes;

[*Re-enter* CASSIO.]

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad;
And his unbookish jealousy must construe
Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviour
Quite in the wrong. How do you now, lieutenant?

CASSIO. The worser that you give me the addition
Whose want even kills me.

IAGO. Ply Desdemona well, and you are sure on't.
[*Speaking lower.*] Now, if this suit lay in Bianca's power,
How quickly should you speed!

CASSIO. Alas! poor caitiff.

OTHELLO. Look! how he laughs already.

IAGO. I never knew woman love man so.

CASSIO. Alas! poor rogue, I think, i' faith, she loves me.

OTHELLO. Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out.

IAGO. Do you hear, Cassio?

OTHELLO. Now he importunes him
To tell it o'er. Go to; well said, well said.

IAGO. She gives it out that you shall marry her;
Do you intend it?

CASSIO. Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO. Do you triumph, Roman? do you triumph?

CASSIO. I marry her! what! a customer? I prithee, bear some charity to my wit; do not think it so unwholesome. Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO. So, so, so, so. They laugh that win.

IAGO. Faith, the cry goes that you shall marry her.

CASSIO. Prithee, say true.

IAGO. I am a very villain else.

OTHELLO. Have you scored me? Well.

CASSIO. This is the monkey's own giving out; she is persuaded I will marry her, out of her own love and flattery, not out of my promise.

OTHELLO. Iago beckons me; now he begins the story.

CASSIO. She was here even now; she haunts me in every place. I was the other day talking on the sea bank with certain Venetians, and thither comes the bauble, and, by this hand, she falls me thus about my neck;—

OTHELLO. Crying 'O dear Cassio!' as it were; his gesture imports it.

CASSIO. So hangs and lolls and weeps upon me; so hales and pulls me; ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO. Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber. O! I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to.

CASSIO. Well, I must leave her company.

IAGO. Before me! look, where she comes.

CASSIO. 'Tis such another fitchew! marry, a perfumed one.

[*Enter* BIANCA.]

What do you mean by this haunting of me?

BIANCA. Let the devil and his dam haunt you! What did you mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was a fine fool to take it. I must take out the work! A likely piece of work, that you should find it in your chamber, and know not who left it there! This is some minx's token, and I must take out the work! There, give it your hobby-horse; wheresoever you had it I'll take out no work on 't.

CASSIO. How now, my sweet Bianca! how now, how now!

OTHELLO. By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!

BIANCA. An you'll come to supper to-night, you may; an you will not, come when you are next prepared for. [*Exit.*]

IAGO. After her, after her.

CASSIO. Faith, I must; she'll rail in the street else.

IAGO. Will you sup there?

CASSIO. Faith, I intend so.

IAGO. Well, I may chance to see you, for I would very fain speak with you.

CASSIO. Prithee, come; will you?

IAGO. Go to; say no more. [*Exit* CASSIO.]

OTHELLO. [*Advancing.*] How shall I murder him, Iago?

IAGO. Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?

OTHELLO. O! Iago.

IAGO. And did you see the handkerchief?

OTHELLO. Was that mine?

IAGO. Yours, by this hand; and to see how he prizes the foolish woman, your wife! she gave it him, and he hath given it his whore.

OTHELLO. I would have him nine years a-killing. A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!

IAGO. Nay, you must forget that.

OTHELLO. Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night; for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone:

I strike it, and it hurts my hand. O! the world hath not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.

IAGO. Nay, that's not your way.

OTHELLO. Hang her! I do but say what she is. So delicate with her needle! An admirable musician! O! she will sing the savageness out of a bear. Of so high and plenteous wit and invention!

IAGO. She's the worse for all this.

OTHELLO. O! a thousand, a thousand times. And then, of so gentle a condition!

IAGO. Ay, too gentle.

OTHELLO. Nay, that's certain; but yet the pity of it, Iago! O! Iago, the pity of it, Iago.

IAGO. If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend; for, if it touch not you, it comes near nobody.

OTHELLO. I will chop her into messes. Cuckold me!

IAGO. O! 't is foul in her.

OTHELLO. With mine officer!

IAGO. That's fouler.

OTHELLO. Get me some poison, Iago! this night; I 'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again. This night, Iago.

IAGO. Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.

OTHELLO. Good, good; the justice of it pleases; very good.

IAGO. And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker; you shall hear more by midnight. [*A trumpet within.*]

OTHELLO. Excellent good. What trumpet is that same?

IAGO. Something from Venice, sure. 'T is Lodovico,
Come from the duke; and, see, your wife is with him.

[*Enter* LODOVICO, DESDEMONA, *and Attendants.*]

LODOVICO. God save the worthy general!

OTHELLO. With all my heart, sir.

LODOVICO. The duke and senators of Venice greet you.
[*Gives him a packet.*]

OTHELLO. I kiss the instrument of their pleasures.
[*Opens the packet, and reads.*]
DESDEMONA. And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?
IAGO. I am very glad to see you, signior;
Welcome to Cyprus.
LODOVICO. I thank you. How does Lieutenant Cassio?
IAGO. Lives, sir.
DESDEMONA. Cousin, there's fall'n between him and my lord
An unkind breach; but you shall make all well.
OTHELLO. Are you sure of that?
DESDEMONA. My lord?
OTHELLO. *This fail you not to do, as you will—*
LODOVICO. He did not call; he's busy in the paper.
Is there division 'twixt my lord and Cassio?
DESDEMONA. A most unhappy one; I would do much
To atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.
OTHELLO. Fire and brimstone!
DESDEMONA. My lord?
OTHELLO. Are you wise?
DESDEMONA. What! is he angry?
LODOVICO. May be the letter mov'd him;
For, as I think, they do command him home,
Deputing Cassio in his government.
DESDEMONA. Trust me, I am glad on 't.
OTHELLO. Indeed!
DESDEMONA. My lord?
OTHELLO. I am glad to see you mad.
DESDEMONA. Why, sweet Othello!
OTHELLO. Devil! [*Strikes her.*]
DESDEMONA. I have not deserv'd this.
LODOVICO. My lord, this would not be believ'd in Venice,
Though I should swear I saw 't; 't is very much;
Make her amends, she weeps.
OTHELLO. O devil, devil!
If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,

Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.
Out of my sight!

DESDEMONA. I will not stay to offend you. [*Going.*]

LODOVICO. Truly, an obedient lady:
I do beseech your lordship, call her back.

OTHELLO. Mistress!

DESDEMONA. My lord?

OTHELLO. What would you with her, sir?

LODOVICO. Who, I, my lord?

OTHELLO. Ay; you did wish that I would make her turn:
Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on,
And turn again; and she can weep, sir, weep;
And she's obedient, as you say, obedient,
Very obedient. Proceed you in your tears.
Concerning this, sir,—O, well-painted passion!—
I am commanded home. Get you away;
I 'll send for you anon. Sir, I obey the mandate,
And will return to Venice. Hence! avaunt!

[*Exit* DESDEMONA.]

Cassio shall have my place. And, sir, to-night,
I do entreat that we may sup together;
You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus. Goats and monkeys!

[*Exit.*]

LODOVICO. Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Call all-in-all sufficient? Is this the nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?

IAGO. He is much chang'd.

LODOVICO. Are his wits safe? is he not light of brain?

IAGO. He 's that he is; I may not breathe my censure.
What he might be, if what he might he is not,
I would to heaven he were!

LODOVICO. What! strike his wife!

IAGO. Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew
That stroke would prove the worst.

LODOVICO. Is it his use?

Or did the letters work upon his blood,
And new-create this fault?

IAGO. Alas, alas!
It is not honesty in me to speak
What I have seen and known. You shall observe him,
And his own courses will denote him so
That I may save my speech. Do but go after
And mark how he continues.

LODOVICO. I am sorry that I am deceiv'd in him.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE. II.— *A Room in the Castle.*

[*Enter* OTHELLO *and* EMILIA.]

OTHELLO. You have seen nothing then?

EMILIA. Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.

OTHELLO. Yes, you have seen Cassio and she together.

EMILIA. But then I saw no harm, and then I heard
Each syllable that breath made up between them.

OTHELLO. What! did they never whisper?

EMILIA. Never, my lord.

OTHELLO. Nor send you out o' the way?

EMILIA. Never.

OTHELLO. To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, nor nothing?

EMILIA. Never, my lord.

OTHELLO. That's strange.

EMILIA. I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,
Lay down my soul at stake: if you think other,
Remove your thought; it doth abuse your bosom.
If any wretch hath put this in your head,
Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse!
For, if she be not honest, chaste, and true,
There's no man happy; the purest of their wives
Is foul as slander.

OTHELLO. Bid her come hither; go.

[*Exit* EMILIA.]

She says enough; yet she's a simple bawd
That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore,
A closet lock and key of villanous secrets;
And yet she 'll kneel and pray; I have seen her do 't.

[*Re-enter* EMILIA, *with* DESDEMONA.]

DESDEMONA. My lord, what is your will?
OTHELLO. Pray, chuck, come hither.
DESDEMONA. What is your pleasure?
OTHELLO. Let me see your eyes;
Look in my face.
DESDEMONA. What horrible fancy 's this?
OTHELLO. [*To* EMILIA.] Some of your function, mistress;
Leave procreants alone and shut the door;
Cough or cry 'hem' if any body come;
Your mystery, your mystery; nay, dispatch. [*Exit* EMILIA.]
DESDEMONA. Upon my knees, what doth your speech import?
I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words.
OTHELLO. Why, what art thou?
DESDEMONA. Your wife, my lord; your true
And loyal wife.
OTHELLO. Come, swear it, damn thyself;
Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
Should fear to seize thee; therefore be double damn'd;
Swear thou art honest.
DESDEMONA. Heaven doth truly know it.
OTHELLO. Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.
DESDEMONA. To whom, my lord? with whom? how am I false?
OTHELLO. Ah! Desdemona; away, away, away!
DESDEMONA. Alas! the heavy day. Why do you weep?
Am I the motive of these tears, my lord?
If haply you my father do suspect
An instrument of this your calling back,

Lay not your blame on me; if you have lost him,
Why, I have lost him too.

OTHELLO. Had it pleas'd heaven
To try me with affliction, had they rain'd
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience; but, alas! to make me
A fixed figure for the time of scorn
To point his slow unmoving finger at;
Yet could I bear that too; well, very well:
But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live or bear no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs
Or else dries up; to be discarded thence!
Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,
Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubim;
Ay, there, look grim as hell!

DESDEMONA. I hope my noble lord esteems me honest.

OTHELLO. O! ay; as summer flies are in the shambles,
That quicken even with blowing. O thou weed!
Who art so lovely fair, and smell'st so sweet
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst ne'er been born.

DESDEMONA. Alas! what ignorant sin have I committed?

OTHELLO. Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
Made to write 'whore' upon? What committed!
Committed! O thou public commoner!
I should make very forges of my cheeks,
That would to cinders burn up modesty,
Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed!
Heaven stops the nose at it and the moon winks,
The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets
Is hush'd within the hollow mine of earth,

And will not hear it. What committed!
Impudent strumpet!
DESDEMONA. By heaven, you do me wrong.
OTHELLO. Are not you a strumpet?
DESDEMONA. No, as I am a Christian.
If to preserve this vessel for my lord
From any other foul unlawful touch
Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.
OTHELLO. What! not a whore?
DESDEMONA. No, as I shall be sav'd.
OTHELLO. Is 't possible?
DESDEMONA. O! heaven forgive us.
OTHELLO. I cry you mercy then;
I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
That married with Othello. You, mistress,
That have the office opposite to Saint Peter,
And keep the gate of hell!

[*Re-enter* EMILIA.]

You, you, ay, you!
We have done our course; there's money for your pains;
I pray you, turn the key and keep our counsel. [*Exit.*]
EMILIA. Alas! what does this gentleman conceive?
How do you, madam? how do you, my good lady?
DESDEMONA. Faith, half asleep.
EMILIA. Good madam, what 's the matter with my lord?
DESDEMONA. With who?
EMILIA. Why, with my lord, madam.
DESDEMONA. Who is thy lord?
EMILIA. He that is yours, sweet lady.
DESDEMONA. I have none; do not talk to me, Emilia;
I cannot weep, nor answer have I none
But what should go by water. Prithee, to-night
Lay on my bed my wedding sheets: remember:
And call thy husband hither.
EMILIA. Here's a change indeed!
[*Exit.*]

DESDEMONA. 'T is meet I should be us'd so, very meet.
How have I been behav'd, that he might stick
The small'st opinion on my least misuse?

[*Re-enter* EMILIA *with* IAGO.]

IAGO. What is your pleasure, madam? How is 't with you?
DESDEMONA. I cannot tell. Those that do teach young babes
Do it with gentle means and easy tasks;
He might have chid me so; for, in good faith,
I am a child to chiding.
IAGO. What 's the matter, lady?
EMILIA. Alas! Iago, my lord hath so bewhor'd her,
Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her,
As true hearts cannot bear.
DESDEMONA. Am I that name, Iago?
IAGO. What name, fair lady?
DESDEMONA. Such as she says my lord did say I was.
EMILIA. He call'd her whore; a beggar in his drink
Could not have laid such terms up his callat.
IAGO. Why did he so?
DESDEMONA. I do not know; I am sure I am none such.
IAGO. Do not weep, do not weep. Alas the day!
EMILIA. Hath she forsook so many noble matches,
Her father and her country and her friends,
To be call'd whore? would it not make one weep?
DESDEMONA. It is my wretched fortune.
IAGO. Beshrew him for 't!
How comes this trick upon him?
DESDEMONA. Nay, heaven doth know.
EMILIA. I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,
Some busy and insinuating rogue,
Some cogging cozening slave, to get some office,
Have not devis'd this slander; I 'll be hang'd else.
IAGO. Fie! there is no such man; it is impossible.
DESDEMONA. If any such there be, heaven pardon him!
EMILIA. A halter pardon him, and hell gnaw his bones?

Why should he call her whore? who keeps her company?
What place? what time? what form? what likelihood?
The Moor 's abus'd by some most villanous knave,
Some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow.
O heaven! that such companions thou 'dst unfold,
And put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascals naked through the world,
Even from the east to the west!

IAGO. Speak within door.

EMILIA. O! fie upon them. Some such squire he was
That turn'd your wit the seamy side without,
And made you to suspect me with the Moor.

IAGO. You are a fool; go to.

DESDEMONA. O good Iago!
What shall I do to win my lord again?
Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them in any other form;
Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
And ever will, though he do shake me off
To beggarly divorcement, love him dearly,
Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much;
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love. I cannot say 'whore':
It does abhor me now I speak the word;
To do the act that might the addition earn
Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.

IAGO. I pray you, be content, 't is but his humour;
The business of the state does him offence,
And he does chide with you.

DESDEMONA. If 't were no other,—

IAGO. 'T is but so, I warrant,
[*Trumpets.*]
Hark! how these instruments summon to supper;

The messengers of Venice stay the meat:
Go in, and weep not; all things shall be well.

[*Exeunt* DESDEMONA *and* EMILIA.]

[*Enter* RODERIGO.]

How now, Roderigo!

RODERIGO. I do not find that thou dealest justly with me.

IAGO. What in the contrary?

RODERIGO. Every day thou daffest me with some device, Iago; and rather, as it seems to me now, keepest from me all conveniency than suppliest me with the least advantage of hope. I will indeed no longer endure it, nor am I yet persuaded to put up in peace what already I have foolishly suffered.

IAGO. Will you hear me, Roderigo?

RODERIGO. Faith, I have heard too much, for your words and performances are no kin together.

IAGO. You charge me most unjustly.

RODERIGO. With nought but truth. I have wasted myself out of my means. The jewels you have had from me to deliver to Desdemona would half have corrupted a votarist; you have told me she hath received them, and returned me expectations and comforts of sudden respect and acquaintance, but I find none.

IAGO. Well; go to; very well.

RODERIGO. Very well! go to! I cannot go to, man; nor 't is not very well: by this hand, I say it is very scurvy, and begin to find myself fobbed in it.

IAGO. Very well.

RODERIGO. I tell you 't is not very well. I will make myself known to Desdemona: if she will return me my jewels, I will give over my suit and repent my unlawful solicitation; if not, assure yourself I will seek satisfaction of you.

IAGO. You have said now.

RODERIGO. Ay, and I have said nothing but what I protest intendment of doing.

IAGO. Why, now I see there 's mettle in thee, and even from

this instant do build on thee a better opinion than ever before. Give me thy hand, Roderigo; thou hast taken against me a most just exception; but yet I protest I have dealt most directly in thy affair.

RODERIGO. It hath not appeared.

IAGO. I grant indeed it hath not appeared, and your suspicion is not without wit and judgment. But, Roderigo, if thou hast that in thee indeed, which I have greater reason to believe now than ever, I mean purpose, courage, and valour, this night show it; if thou the next night following enjoy not Desdemona, take me from this world with treachery and devise engines for my life.

RODERIGO. Well, what is it? is it within reason and compass?

IAGO. Sir, there is especial commission come from Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place.

RODERIGO. Is that true? why, then Othello and Desdemona return again to Venice.

IAGO. O! no, he goes into Mauritania, and takes away with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be lingered here by some accident; wherein none can be so determinate as the removing of Cassio.

RODERIGO. How do you mean, removing of him?

IAGO. Why, by making him uncapable of Othello's place; knocking out his brains.

RODERIGO. And that you would have me do?

IAGO. Ay; if you dare do yourself a profit and a right. He sups to-night with a harlotry, and thither will I go to him; he knows not yet of his honourable fortune. If you will watch his going thence, which I will fashion to fall out between twelve and one, you may take him at your pleasure; I will be near to second your attempt, and he shall fall between us. Come, stand not amazed at it, but go along with me; I will show you such a necessity in his death that you shall think yourself bound to put it on him. It is now high supper-time, and the night grows to waste; about it.

RODERIGO. I will hear further reason for this.

IAGO. And you shall be satisfied. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene III.—*Another Room in the Castle.*

[*Enter* Othello, Lodovico, Desdemona, Emilia, *and Attendants.*]

Lodovico. I do beseech you, sir, trouble yourself no further.

Othello. O! pardon me; 't will do me good to walk.

Lodovico. Madam, good night; I humbly thank your ladyship.

Desdemona. Your honour is most welcome.

Othello. Will you walk, sir?
O! Desdemona.

Desdemona. My lord?

Othello. Get you to bed on the instant, I will be returned forthwith; dismiss your attendant there; look it be done.

Desdemona. I will, my lord.

[*Exeunt* Othello, Lodovico *and Attendants.*]

Emilia. How goes it now? he looks gentler than he did

Desdemona. He says he will return incontinent;
He hath commanded me to go to bed,
And bade me to dismiss you.

Emilia. Dismiss me!

Desdemona. It was his bidding; therefore, good Emilia,
Give me my nightly wearing, and adieu:
We must not now displease him.

Emilia. I would you had never seen him.

Desdemona. So would not I; my love doth so approve him,
That even his stubbornness, his checks and frowns,—
Prithee, unpin me,—have grace and favour in them.

Emilia. I have laid those sheets you bade me on the bed.

Desdemona. All's one. Good faith! how foolish are our minds;
If I do die before thee, prithee, shroud me
In one of those same sheets.

Emilia. Come, come, you talk.

Desdemona. My mother had a maid call'd Barbara;
She was in love, and he she lov'd prov'd mad
And did forsake her; she had a song of 'willow';

An old thing 't was, but it express'd her fortune,
And she died singing it; that song to-night
Will not go from my mind; I have much to do
But to go hang my head all at one side,
And sing it like poor Barbara. Prithee, dispatch.

EMILIA. Shall I go fetch your night-gown?

DESDEMONA. No, unpin me here.
This Lodovico is a proper man.

EMILIA. A very handsome man.

DESDEMONA. He speaks well.

EMILIA. I know a lady in Venice would have walked barefoot to Palestine for a touch of his nether lip.

DESDEMONA. *The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,*
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow:
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans;
Sing willow, willow, willow;
Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;—

Lay by these.—

Sing willow, willow, willow.

Prithee, hie thee; he 'll come anon.—

Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve—,

Nay, that' s not next. Hark! who is 't that knocks?

EMILIA. It is the wind.

DESDEMONA. *I call'd my love false love; but what said he then?*
Sing willow, willow, willow:
If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men.

So, get thee gone; good night. Mine eyes do itch;
Doth that bode weeping?

EMILIA. 'T is neither here nor there.

DESDEMONA. I have heard it said so. O! these men, these men.
Dost thou in conscience think, tell me, Emilia,
That there be women do abuse their husbands
In such gross kind?

EMILIA. There be some such, no question.

DESDEMONA. Would'st thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMILIA. Why, would not you?

DESDEMONA. No, by this heavenly light!

EMILIA. Nor I neither by this heavenly light; I might do 't as well i' the dark.

DESDEMONA. Would'st thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMILIA. The world's a huge thing; it is a great price
For a small vice.

DESDEMONA. In troth, I think thou would'st not.

EMILIA. In troth, I think I should, and undo 't when I had done. Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any petty exhibition; but for the whole world; why, who would not make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for 't.

DESDEMONA. Beshrew me, if I would do such a wrong
For the whole world.

EMILIA. Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' the world; and having the world for your labour 't is a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.

DESDEMONA. I do not think there is any such woman.

EMILIA. Yes, a dozen; and as many to the vantage as would store the world they played for.
But I do think it is their husbands' faults
If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties,
And pour our treasures into foreign laps,
Or else break out in peevish jealousies
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,
Or scant our former having in despite;

Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them; they see and smell,
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
As husbands have. What is it that they do
When they change us for others? Is it sport?
I think it is; and doth affection breed it?
I think it doth; is 't frailty that thus errs?
It is so too; and have not we affections,
Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?
Then let them use us well; else let them know,
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

DESDEMONA. Good night, good night; heaven me such uses send,
Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V

SCENE. I—*Cyprus. A Street.*

[*Enter* IAGO *and* RODERIGO.]

IAGO. Here, stand behind this bulk; straight will he come:
Wear thy good rapier bare, and put it home.
Quick, quick; fear nothing; I 'll be at thy elbow.
It makes us, or it mars us; think on that,
And fix most firm thy resolution.

RODERIGO. Be near at hand; I may miscarry in 't.

IAGO. Here, at thy hand: be bold, and take thy stand.
[*Retires.*]

RODERIGO. I have no great devotion to the deed;
And yet he has given me satisfying reasons;
'T is but a man gone; forth, my sword; he dies.

IAGO. I have rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense,
And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio,
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,

Every way makes my gain: live Roderigo,
He calls me to a restitution large
Of gold and jewels that I bobb'd from him,
As gifts to Desdemona;
It must not be: if Cassio do remain,
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly; and, besides, the Moor
May unfold me to him; there stand I in much peril.
No, he must die. But so: I hear him coming.

[*Enter* CASSIO.]

RODERIGO. I know his gait; 'tis he. Villain, thou diest!
[*Makes a pass at* CASSIO.]

CASSIO. That thrust had been mine enemy indeed
But that my coat is better than thou know'st;
I will make proof of thine. [*Draws, and wounds* RODERIGO.]

RODERIGO. O! I am slain.

IAGO [*from behind wounds* CASSIO *in the leg, and exit.*]

CASSIO. I am maim'd for ever. Help, ho! murder! murder!
[*Falls.*]

[*Enter* OTHELLO, *at a distance.*]

OTHELLO. The voice of Cassio: Iago keeps his word.

RODERIGO. O! villain that I am.

OTHELLO. It is even so.

CASSIO. O, help, ho! light! a surgeon!

OTHELLO. 'Tis he. O brave Iago, honest and just!
That hast such noble sense of thy friend's wrong;
Thou teachest me. Minion, your dear lies dead,
And your unblest fate hies; strumpet, I come!
Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted;
Thy bed lust-stain'd shall with lust's blood be spotted. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter* LODOVICO *and* GRATIANO, *at a distance.*]

CASSIO. What, ho! no watch? no passage? murder! murder!

GRATIANO. 'Tis some mischance; the cry is very direful.

CASSIO. O, help!

LODOVICO. Hark!

RODERIGO. O wretched villain!

LODOVICO. Two or three groan; it is a heavy night;
These may be counterfeits; let 's think 't unsafe
To come in to the cry without more help.

RODERIGO. Nobody come? then shall I bleed to death.

LODOVICO. Hark!

[*Re-enter* IAGO, *with a light.*]

GRATIANO. Here 's one comes in his shirt, with light and weapons.

IAGO. Who 's there? whose noise is this that cries on murder?

LODOVICO. We do not know.

IAGO. Did not you hear a cry?

CASSIO. Here, here! for heaven's sake, help me!

IAGO. What 's the matter?

GRATIANO. This is Othello's ancient, as I take it.

LODOVICO. The same indeed; a very valiant fellow.

IAGO. What are you here that cry so grievously?

CASSIO. Iago? O! I am spoil'd, undone by villains:
Give me some help.

IAGO. O me, lieutenant! what villains have done this?

CASSIO. I think that one of them is hereabout,
And cannot make away.

IAGO. O treacherous villains!
[*To* LODOVICO *and* GRATIANO.] What are you there? come in, and give some help!

RODERIGO. O! help me here.

CASSIO. That's one of them.

IAGO. O murderous slave! O villain!
[*Stabs* RODERIGO.]

RODERIGO. O damn'd Iago! O inhuman dog!

IAGO. Kill men i' the dark! Where be these bloody thieves?
How silent is this town! Ho! murder! murder!
What may you be? are you of good or evil?

LODOVICO. As you shall prove us, praise us.

IAGO. Signior Lodovico?
LODOVICO. He, sir.
IAGO. I cry your mercy. Here 's Cassio hurt by villains.
GRATIANO. Cassio!
IAGO. How is 't, brother?
CASSIO. My leg is cut in two.
IAGO. Marry, heaven forbid!
Light, gentlemen; I 'll bind it with my shirt.

[*Enter* BIANCA.]

BIANCA. What is the matter, ho? who is 't that cried?
IAGO. Who is 't that cried!
BIANCA. O my dear Cassio! my sweet Cassio!
O Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!
IAGO. O notable strumpet! Cassio, may you suspect
Who they should be that have thus mangled you?
CASSIO. No.
GRATIANO. I am sorry to find you thus; I have been to seek you.
IAGO. Lend me a garter. So. O! for a chair,
To bear him easily hence.
BIANCA. Alas! he faints. O Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!
IAGO. Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash
To be a party in this injury.
Patience awhile, good Cassio. Come, come.
Lend me a light. Know we this face or no?
Alas! my friend and my dear countryman,
Roderigo; no; yes, sure. O heaven! Roderigo.
GRATIANO. What! of Venice?
IAGO. Even he, sir; did you know him?
GRATIANO. Know him! ay.
IAGO. Signior Gratiano! I cry you gentle pardon;
These bloody accidents must excuse my manners,
That so neglected you.
GRATIANO. I am glad to see you.
IAGO. How do you, Cassio? O! a chair, a chair.
GRATIANO. Roderigo!

IAGO. He, he, 't is he. [*A chair brought in.*]
O! that 's well said; the chair.
Some good man bear him carefully from hence;
I 'll fetch the general's surgeon. [*To* BIANCA.] For you, mistress,
Save you your labour. He that lies slain here, Cassio,
Was my dear friend. What malice was between you?
CASSIO. None in the world; nor do I know the man.
IAGO. [*To* BIANCA.] What! look you pale? O! bear him out o' the air [CASSIO *and* RODERIGO *are borne off.*]
Stay you, good gentlemen. Look you pale, mistress?
Do you perceive the ghastness of her eye?
Nay, if you stare, we shall hear more anon.
Behold her well; I pray you, look upon her:
Do you see, gentlemen? nay, guiltiness will speak
Though tongues were out of use.

[*Enter* EMILIA.]

EMILIA. 'Las! what 's the matter? what 's the matter, husband?
IAGO. Cassio hath here been set on in the dark
By Roderigo and fellows that are 'scap'd.
He 's almost slain, and Roderigo dead.
EMILIA. Alas! good gentleman; alas! good Cassio.
IAGO. This is the fruit of whoring. Prithee, Emilia,
Go know of Cassio where he supp'd to-night.
[*To* BIANCA.] What! do you shake at that?
BIANCA. He supp'd at my house; but I therefore shake not.
IAGO. O! did he so? I charge you, go with me.
EMILIA. Fie, fie upon thee, strumpet!
BIANCA. I am no strumpet, but of life as honest
As you that thus abuse me.
EMILIA. As I! foh! fie upon thee!
IAGO. Kind gentlemen, let 's go see poor Cassio dress'd.
Come, mistress, you must tell 's another tale.
Emilia, run you to the citadel,
And tell my lord and lady what hath happ'd.

Will you go on afore? [*Aside.*] This is the night
That either makes me or fordoes me quite. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Bedchamber in the Castle.* DESDEMONA *in bed asleep. A light burning.*

[*Enter* OTHELLO.]

OTHELLO. It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul;
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!
It is the cause. Yet I 'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she 'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light:
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither: I'll smell it on the tree. [*Kisses her.*]
O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after. One more, and this the last:
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears; this sorrow 's heavenly,
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

DESDEMONA. Who 's there? Othello?

OTHELLO. Ay, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA. Will you come to bed, my lord?

OTHELLO. Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA. Ay, my lord.

OTHELLO. If you bethink yourself of any crime
Unreconcil'd as yet to heaven and grace,
Solicit for it straight.

DESDEMONA. Alas! my lord, what may you mean by that?
OTHELLO. Well, do it, and be brief; I will walk by:
I would not kill thy unprepared spirit;
No; heaven forfend! I would not kill thy soul.
DESDEMONA. Talk you of killing?
OTHELLO. Ay, I do.
DESDEMONA. Then heaven
Have mercy on me!
OTHELLO. Amen! with all my heart.
DESDEMONA. If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.
OTHELLO. Hum!
DESDEMONA. And yet I fear you; for you are fatal then
When your eyes roll so. Why I should fear I know not.
Since guiltiness I know not; but yet I feel I fear.
OTHELLO. Think on thy sins.
DESDEMONA. They are loves I bear to you.
OTHELLO. Ay, and for that thou diest.
DESDEMONA. That death 's unnatural that kills for loving.
Alas! why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame;
These are portents, but yet I hope, I hope
They do not point on me.
OTHELLO. Peace, and be still!
DESDEMONA. I will so. What 's the matter?
OTHELLO. That handkerchief which I so lov'd and gave thee
Thou gav'st to Cassio.
DESDEMONA. No, by my life and soul!
Send for the man and ask him.
OTHELLO. Sweet soul, take heed,
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy deathbed.
DESDEMONA. Ay, but not yet to die.
OTHELLO. Yes, presently;
Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin;
For to deny each article with oath
Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception
That I do groan withal. Thou art to die.

DESDEMONA. Then Lord have mercy on me!
OTHELLO. I say, amen.
DESDEMONA. And have you mercy too! I never did
Offend you in my life; never lov'd Cassio
But with such general warranty of heaven
As I might love; I never gave him token.
OTHELLO. By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in 's hand.
O perjur'd woman! thou dost stone my heart,
And mak'st me call what I intend to do
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice:
I saw the handkerchief.
DESDEMONA. He found it then;
I never gave it him. Send for him hither;
Let him confess a truth.
OTHELLO. He hath confess'd.
DESDEMONA. What, my lord?
OTHELLO. That he hath us'd thee.
DESDEMONA. How? unlawfully?
OTHELLO. Ay.
DESDEMONA. He will not say so.
OTHELLO. No; his mouth is stopp'd;
Honest Iago hath ta'en order for 't.
DESDEMONA. O! my fear interprets. What! is he dead?
OTHELLO. Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
Had stomach for them all.
DESDEMONA. Alas! he is betray'd and I undone.
OTHELLO. Out, strumpet! Weep'st thou for him to my face?
DESDEMONA. O! banish me, my lord, but kill me not.
OTHELLO. Down, strumpet!
DESDEMONA. Kill me to-morrow; let me live to-night.
OTHELLO. Nay, if you strive,—
DESDEMONA. But half an hour!
OTHELLO. Being done, there is no pause.
DESDEMONA. But while I say one prayer.
OTHELLO. It is too late.
[*He stifles her.*]

EMILIA. [*Within.*] My lord, my lord! what, ho! my lord, my lord!

OTHELLO. What noise is this? Not dead? not yet quite dead?

I that am cruel am yet merciful;
I would not have thee linger in thy pain.
So, so.

EMILIA. [*Within.*] What, ho! my lord, my lord!

OTHELLO. Who's there?

EMILIA. [*Within.*] O! good my lord, I would speak a word with you.

OTHELLO. Yes; 't is Emilia: by and by. She 's dead.
'T is like she comes to speak of Cassio's death;
The noise was here. Ha! no more moving?
Still as the grave. Shall she come in? Were 't good?
I think she stirs again: no. What 's best to do?
If she come in she'll sure speak to my wife:
My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife:
O, insupportable! O heavy hour!
Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe
Should yawn at alteration.

EMILIA. [*Within.*] I do beseech you
That I may speak with you, O, good my lord!

OTHELLO. I had forgot thee. O! come in, Emilia.
Soft, by and by: let me the curtains draw.
Where art thou? [*Unlocks the door.*]

[*Enter* EMILIA.]

What's the matter with thee now?

EMILIA. O! my good lord, yonder 's foul murder done.

OTHELLO. What! now?

EMILIA. But now, my lord.

OTHELLO. It is the very error of the moon;
She comes more nearer earth than she was wont,
And makes men mad.

EMILIA. Cassio, my lord, has kill'd a young Venetian
Call'd Roderigo.
OTHELLO. Roderigo kill'd!
And Cassio kill'd!
EMILIA. No, Cassio is not kill'd.
OTHELLO. Not Cassio kill'd! Then murder 's out of tune.
And sweet revenge grows harsh.
DESDEMONA. O! falsely, falsely murder'd.
EMILIA. Alas! what cry is that?
OTHELLO. That! what?
EMILIA. Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice:
Help! help, ho! help! O lady, speak again!
Sweet Desdemona! O! sweet mistress, speak.
DESDEMONA. A guiltless death I die.
EMILIA. O! who hath done this deed?
DESDEMONA. Nobody; I myself; farewell:
Commend me to my kind lord. O! farewell! [*Dies.*]
OTHELLO. Why, how should she be murder'd?
EMILIA. Alas! who knows?
OTHELLO. You heard her say herself it was not I.
EMILIA. She said so; I must needs report the truth.
OTHELLO. She 's like a liar gone to burning hell;
'T was I that kill'd her.
EMILIA. O! the more angel she.
And you the blacker devil.
OTHELLO. She turn'd to folly, and she was a whore.
EMILIA. Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.
OTHELLO. She was false as water.
EMILIA. Thou art rash as fire to say
That she was false: O! she was heavenly true.
OTHELLO. Cassio did tup her; ask thy husband else.
O! I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell
But that I did proceed upon just grounds
To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all.
EMILIA. My husband!
OTHELLO. Thy husband.
EMILIA. That she was false to wedlock?

OTHELLO. Ay, with Cassio. Nay, had she been true,
If heaven would make me such another world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
I 'd not have sold her for it.

EMILIA. My husband!

OTHELLO. Ay, 't was he that told me first:
An honest man he is, and hates the slime
That sticks on filthy deeds.

EMILIA. My husband!

OTHELLO. What needs this iterance, woman?
I say thy husband.

EMILIA. O mistress! villany hath made mocks with love.
My husband say that she was false!

OTHELLO. He, woman;
I say thy husband: dost understand the word?
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.

EMILIA. If he say so, may his pernicious soul
Rot half a grain a day! he lies to the heart:
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

OTHELLO. Ha!

EMILIA. Do thy worst;
This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven
Than thou wast worthy her.

OTHELLO. Peace! you were best.

EMILIA. Thou hast not half that power to do me harm
As I have to be hurt. O gull! O dolt!
As ignorant as dirt! thou hast done a deed,—
I care not for thy sword; I 'll make thee known,
Though I lost twenty lives. Help! help, ho! help!
The Moor has kill'd my mistress! Murder! murder!

[*Enter* MONTANO, GRATIANO, IAGO, *and Others.*]

MONTANO. What is the matter? How now, general!

EMILIA. O! are you come, Iago? you have done well,
That men must lay their murders on your neck.

GRATIANO. What is the matter?

EMILIA. Disprove this villain if thou be'st a man:

He says thou told'st him that his wife was false.
I know thou didst not, thou 'rt not such a villain.
Speak, for my heart is full.

IAGO. I told him what I thought, and told no more
Than what he found himself was apt and true.

EMILIA. But did you ever tell him she was false?

IAGO. I did.

EMILIA. You told a lie, an odious, damned lie;
Upon my soul, a lie, a wicked lie.
She false with Cassio! Did you say with Cassio?

IAGO. With Cassio, mistress. Go to, charm your tongue.

EMILIA. I will not charm my tongue; I am bound to speak.
My mistress here lies murder'd in her bed.

ALL. O heavens forfend!

EMILIA. And your reports have set the murder on.

OTHELLO. Nay, stare not, masters; it is true, indeed.

GRATIANO. 'T is a strange truth.

MONTANO. O monstrous act!

EMILIA. Villany! villany! villany!
I think upon 't, I think, I smell 't: O villany!
I thought so then: I 'll kill myself for grief.
O! villany, villany.

IAGO. What! are you mad? I charge you, get you home.

EMILIA. Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak:
'T is proper I obey him, but not now.
Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home.

OTHELLO. O! O! O! [*Falls on the bed.*]

EMILIA. Nay, lay thee down and roar,
For thou hast kill'd the sweetest innocent
That e'er did lift up eye.

OTHELLO. [*Rising.*] O! she was foul.
I scarce did know you, uncle. There lies your niece,
Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopp'd:
I know this act shows horrible and grim.

GRATIANO. Poor Desdemona! I am glad thy father 's dead.
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief
Shore his old thread in twain: did he live now,

This sight would make him do a desperate turn,
Yea, curse his better angel from his side,
And fall to reprobance.

OTHELLO. 'T is pitiful; but yet Iago knows
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame
A thousand times committed; Cassio confess'd it:
And she did gratify his amorous works
With that recognizance and pledge of love
Which I first gave her. I saw it in his hand:
It was a handkerchief, an antique token
My father gave my mother.

EMILIA. O heaven! O heavenly powers!

IAGO. Come, hold your peace.

EMILIA. 'T will out, 't will out; I hold my peace, sir; no;
No, I will speak as liberal as the north;
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,
All, all, cry shame against me, yet I 'll speak.

IAGO. Be wise, and get you home.

EMILIA. I will not.

[IAGO *offers to stab* EMILIA.]

GRATIANO. Fie!
Your sword upon a woman?

EMILIA. O thou dull Moor! that handkerchief thou speak'st of
I found by fortune and did give my husband;
For often, with a solemn earnestness,
More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle,
He begg'd of me to steal it.

IAGO. Villanous whore!

EMILIA. She gave it Cassio! no, alas! I found it,
And I did give 't my husband.

IAGO. Filth, thou liest!

EMILIA. By heaven, I do not, I do not, gentlemen.
O murderous coxcomb! what should such a fool
Do with so good a wife?

OTHELLO. Are there no stones in heaven
But what serve for the thunder? Precious villain!

[*He runs at* IAGO: IAGO *stabs* EMILIA, *and exit.*]

GRATIANO. The woman falls; sure, he hath kill'd his wife.
EMILIA. Ay, ay. O! lay me by my mistress' side.
GRATIANO. He 's gone; but his wife 's kill'd.
MONTANO. 'T is a notorious villain. Take you this weapon
Which I have here recover'd from the Moor.
Come, guard the door without; let him not pass,
But kill him rather. I 'll after that same villain,
For 't is a damned slave.

[*Exeunt* MONTANO *and* GRATIANO.]

OTHELLO. I am not valiant neither,
But every puny whisper gets my sword.
But why should honour outlive honesty?
Let it go all.
EMILIA. What did thy song bode, lady?
Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan,
And die in music.

Willow, willow, willow.

Moor, she was chaste; she lov'd thee, cruel Moor;
So come my soul to bliss as I speak true;
So speaking as I think, I die, I die. [*Dies.*]
OTHELLO. I have another weapon in this chamber;
It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.
O! here it is. Uncle, I must come forth.
GRATIANO. [*Within.*] If thou attempt it, it will cost thee dear:
Thou hast no weapon, and perforce must suffer.
OTHELLO. Look in upon me then, and speak with me,
Or, naked as I am, I will assault thee.

[*Re-enter* GRATIANO.]

GRATIANO. What is the matter?
OTHELLO. Behold! I have a weapon;
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh: I have seen the day,
That with this little arm, and this good sword,
I have made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop: but, O vain boast!

Who can control his fate? 't is not so now.
Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd;
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.
Do you go back dismay'd? 't is a lost fear;
Man but a rush against Othello's breast,
And he retires. Where should Othello go?
Now how dost thou look now? O ill-starr'd wench!
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl!
Even like thy chastity.
O! cursed, cursed slave. Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!
Oh! oh! oh!

[*Enter* Lodovico, Montano, Cassio *carried in a chair, and Officers with* Iago, *prisoner.*]

Lodovico. Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?
Othello. That 's he that was Othello; here I am.
Lodovico. Where is that viper? bring the villain forth.
Othello. I look down towards his feet; but that 's a fable:
If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.

[*Wounds* Iago.]

Lodovico. Wrench his sword from him.
Iago. I bleed, sir; but not kill'd.
Othello. I am not sorry neither; I 'd have thee live;
For, in my sense, 't is happiness to die.
Lodovico. O thou Othello! that wert once so good,
Fall'n in the practice of a damned slave,
What shall be said to thee?
Othello. Why, any thing:
An honourable murderer, if you will;
For nought did I in hate, but all in honour.

LODOVICO. This wretch hath part confess'd his villany:
Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?
OTHELLO. Ay.
CASSIO. Dear general, I never gave you cause.
OTHELLO. I do believe it, and I ask you pardon.
Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?
IAGO. Demand me nothing: what you know, you know:
From this time forth I never will speak word.
LODOVICO. What! not to pray?
GRATIANO. Torments will ope your lips.
OTHELLO. Well, thou dost best.
LODOVICO. Sir, you shall understand what hath befall'n,
Which, as I think, you know not. Here is a letter
Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo,
And here another; the one of them imports
The death of Cassio to be undertook
By Roderigo.
OTHELLO. O villain!
CASSIO. Most heathenish and most gross!
LODOVICO. Now here 's another discontented paper,
Found in his pocket too; and this, it seems,
Roderigo meant to have sent this damned villain,
But that, belike, Iago in the interim
Came in and satisfied him.
OTHELLO. O the pernicious caitiff!
How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief
That was my wife's?
CASSIO. I found it in my chamber;
And he himself confess'd but even now
That there he dropp'd it for a special purpose
Which wrought to his desire.
OTHELLO. O fool! fool! fool!
CASSIO. There is besides in Roderigo's letter
How he upbraids Iago that he made him
Brave me upon the watch; whereon it came
That I was cast: and even but now he spake,

After long seeming dead, Iago hurt him,
Iago set him on.

LODOVICO. You must forsake this room and go with us;
Your power and your command is taken off,
And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave,
If there be any cunning cruelty
That can torment him much and hold him long,
It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest,
Till that the nature of your fault be known
To the Venetian state. Come, bring him away.

OTHELLO. Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know 't;
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak
Of one that lov'd not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdu'd eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum. Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus. [*Stabs himself.*]

LODOVICO. O bloody period!

GRATIANO. All that 's spoke is marr'd.

OTHELLO. I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee; no way but this.

[*Falls on the bed.*]

Killing myself to die upon a kiss. [*Dies.*]

CASSIO. This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon;
For he was great of heart.

LODOVICO. [*To* IAGO.] O Spartan dog!
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea,
Look on the tragic loading of this bed;
This is thy work; the object poisons sight;
Let it be hid. Gratiano, keep the house,
And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor,
For they succeed on you. To you, lord governor,
Remains the censure of this hellish villain,
The time, the place, the torture; O! enforce it.
Myself will straight abroad, and to the state
This heavy act with heavy heart relate.

[*Exeunt.*]

THE CENCI

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(1819)

INTRODUCTION

The Cenci, though quasi-classical in form, is a romantic tragedy of crime and revenge of the type created by Euripides and Seneca and brought to perfection by Shakespeare in *Hamlet,* and then perverted by the 18th and 19th century writers of Gothic Romance into literature of pure horror. The classical elements in *The Cenci* are its unity of action, its absence of comic relief and its exclusion of violent scenes from the stage. The romantic elements are of three kinds: those of earlier romantic drama, such as the verse form, and the theme of crime, revenge, and punishment; those derived from the Gothic romances, the lurid atmosphere and the exaggeration of character, as in Count Cenci, a monster of viciousness; and those peculiarly characteristic of the 19th century romantic movement, emotional excess, and partisan intrusion of the author's sympathies.

Such of the romantic elements in *The Cenci* as are universal, Shelley seems to have derived principally from the Elizabethans, especially Shakespeare, though he admits no definite borrowings from these sources. Verbal resemblances to several Shakespearean tragedies are numerous and several scenes and passages in the play are unquestionably imitations. Compare, for example, Count Cenci's curse in Act IV, Scene 1 with that of King Lear in Act I, Scene 4; the dialogue between Beatrice and the murderers in Act IV, Scene 3 with that of Macbeth in Act II, Scene 2 and Act III, Scenes 1 and 3; and the banquet scene in Act I, Scene 3 with that in *Macbeth,* Act III, Scene 4. The poetic medium of *The Cenci* is, of course, blank verse as employed by Marlowe and Shakespeare.

The remaining romantic influences are modern. To the Gothic romance the drama owes especially its exaggeration of character and its lurid atmosphere. The blood-curdling monstrosity of Count Cenci may be compared, first with the savagery of Aaron in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* and

then with the violence of Heathcliffe in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights.* The chains, the dungeons, the rack and the poison cup are familiar elements in the Gothic novel. However much of the story Shelley may have found in his manuscript source, the influence of the literature of horror is markedly present, and was probably directly exercised by Mrs. Shelley herself, the author of *Frankenstein,* one of the outstanding novels of the Gothic school.

The last of the romantic elements results from the fact that Shelley was not primarily a dramatist, but a lyric poet of the romantic school, who saw the political and ecclesiastical corruption of Renaissance Italy through the smoke of the French Revolution. The objective portraiture of Shakespeare, which delineates faithfully and humanly both Desdemona and Iago, was beyond Shelley's powers. In his eyes Beatrice is the wholly innocent victim of an inhuman father and a corrupt system; Count Cenci is wholly wicked and the representative of that system. The result is twofold. Beatrice and her father tend to become abstractions, one of goodness, the other of evil, rather than rounded and convincing characters. Secondly, the lyric poet's glorification of innocence and purity, and hatred of all that destroys them tends to deflect the reader's attention from the tragedy of Beatrice to the poet's protest for which she has been made the mouthpiece; so that to the extent to which *The Cenci* becomes peculiarly characteristic of the romantic movement, it loses universality. How tragedy finally became avowedly an instrument of protest and criticism will be shown in Ibsen's *Ghosts.* Without the romantic hatred of injustice at the beginning of the century the drama of reasoned protest which appeared at its end might not have been possible.

Primarily, however, *The Cenci,* is to be read not as looking forward to the new nor as harking back to the old, but as the most truly dramatic product of the romantic movement in 19th century England. Its dramatic power is uneven, but not lacking; and in spite of the defects which have been suggested above, it is emotionally genuine and compelling. In this play, for almost the last time in English dramatic literature, an individual rises superior to his fate and becomes inspiring in suffering.

The comment is frequently made that *The Cenci* may be best appreciated as a *closet drama,* that kind of drama which is written to be read rather than acted and of which Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and Byron's *Manfred* are other notable examples. But Shelley intended the drama for the stage and attempted to have it performed at Covent Garden. It was refused, however, because of its theme, and was not presented in the theatre until 1866. It was successfully revived in London by John Barrymore in 1921.

TEXT OF THE PLAY

PREFACE BY SHELLEY

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII, in the year 1593. The story is, that an old man having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.[1] Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest; and that the feelings of the company

[1] The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the Ms. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her, who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of La Cenci.

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained, as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, King Lear and the two plays in which the tale of Œdipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakespeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonored by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character: the few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with

which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

I have endeavored as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Count Francesco Cenci

Bernardo, Giacomo, } *his Sons*

Cardinal Camillo

Orsino, *a Prelate*

Savella, *the Pope's Legate*

Olimpio, Marzio, } *Assassins*

Andrea, *Servant to Cenci*

Nobles—Judges—Guards—Servants

Lucretia, *Wife of Cenci, and Step-mother of his children*

Beatrice, *his Daughter*

The Scene *lies principally in Rome, but changes during the fourth Act to Petrella, a Castle among the Apulian Apennines*

Time. *During the Pontificate of Clement VIII*

THE CENCI

ACT I

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

[*Enter* COUNT CENCI, *and* CARDINAL CAMILLO.]

CAMILLO. That matter of the murder is husht up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.—
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point: he said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live:—
But that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills, little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

CENCI. The third of my possessions—let it go!
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so!
Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher

Than his most worthless life:—it angers me!
Respited me from Hell:—so may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nephews, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

CAMILLO. Oh, Count Cenci!
So much that thou mightst honorably live
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Thro' those snow white and venerable hairs!—
Your children should be sitting round you now,
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count,—you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors, but it vanisht not—I markt
Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
Do I behold you in dishonored age
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

CENCI. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.

A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter—
He was accustomed to frequent my house;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:
I think they never saw him any more.

CAMILLO. Thou execrable man, beware!—

CENCI. Of thee?
Nay this is idle:—We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart—
For you give out that you have half reformed me,
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent
If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury,
All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel—
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's, and that mine.
And I have no remorse and little fear.
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish, and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know,
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplisht.

CAMILLO. Art thou not
Most miserable?

CENCI. Why miserable?—
No.—I am what your theologians call
Hardened;—which they must be in impudence,

So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought;
While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
Invention palls:—Ay, we must all grow old—
And but that there yet remains a deed to act
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine—I 'd do—I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets:
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees,
And I grew tired:—yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals,
The dry fixt eyeball; the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

CAMILLO. Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me;
I thank my God that I believe you not.

[*Enter* ANDREA.]

ANDREA. My lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

CENCI. Bid him attend me in the grand saloon.

[*Exit* ANDREA.]

CAMILLO. Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee.

[*Exit* CAMILLO.]

CENCI. The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons;
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off;
And meaning if I could to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned:—then, as to Beatrice—

[*Looking around him suspiciously.*]

I think they cannot hear me at that door;
What if they should? And yet I need not speak
Tho' the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think! Thou, pavement, which I tread
Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step scorning surprise,
But not of my intent!—Andrea!

[*Enter* ANDREA.]

ANDREA. My lord?
CENCI. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening:—no, at midnight and alone. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter* BEATRICE *and* ORSINO, *as in conversation.*

BEATRICE. Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress;—two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

ORSINO. You said you loved me then.
BEATRICE. You are a Priest,
Speak to me not of love.
ORSINO. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a Priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?
BEATRICE. As I have said, speak to me not of love;
Had you a dispensation I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah no! forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Sterner than else my nature might have been;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forbode,—but what can they forbode
Worse than I now endure?
ORSINO. All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice;

Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

BEATRICE. Your zeal for all I wish;—Ah me, you are cold!
Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . . [*aside*] Alas!
Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend! [*To* ORSINO.]
This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks
His inward hate. 'T is bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees:
Great God! that such a father should be mine!
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale Mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady! She expects some happy change
In his dark spirit from this act; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition:
Till then—farewell.

ORSINO. Farewell. [*Exit* BEATRICE.]

I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition:
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration:—
Old men are testy and will have their way;
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,

And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love—a net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no! A friendless girl
Who clings to me, as to her only hope:—
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
If she escape me. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet. Enter* CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

CENCI. Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honors our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And in my absence from your merry meetings
An evil word is gone abroad of me;
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 't is given,
And we have pledged a health or two together,
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

FIRST GUEST. In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,

To act the deeds that rumor pins on you.
[*To his companion.*] I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye!

SECOND GUEST. Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count.

CENCI. It is indeed a most desired event.
If, when a parent from a parent's heart
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard—
And suddenly beyond his dearest hope,
It is accomplisht, he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment,
Then honor me thus far—for I am he.

BEATRICE [*to* LUCRETIA]. Great God! How horrible!
Some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers.

LUCRETIA. Fear not, Child,
He speaks too frankly.

BEATRICE. Ah! my blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

CENCI. Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God!
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead!—Why, dead!—What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead;
And they will need no food or raiment more:
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not

Expect I should maintain them in their cots.
Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous gla

[LUCRETIA *sinks, half-fainting;* BEATRICE *supports her.*]

BEATRICE. It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

CENCI. Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth;—
And whose most favoring Providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crusht him to a mummy,
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December:
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[*The assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.*]

FIRST GUEST. Oh, horrible! I will depart—
SECOND GUEST. And I.—
THIRD GUEST. No, stay!
I do believe it is some jest; tho' faith!
'T is mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El dorado;
'T is but to season some such news; stay, stay!
I see 't is only raillery by his smile.

CENCI [*filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up*]. Oh, thou bright wine whose purple splendor leaps

And bubbles gayly in this golden bowl
Under the lamp-light, as my spirits do,
To hear the death of my accursèd sons!
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
And I will taste no other wine to-night.
Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.

A Guest [*rising*]. Thou wretch!
Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain?

Camillo. For God's sake
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane,
Some ill will come of this.

Second Guest. Seize, silence him!

First Guest. I will!

Third Guest. And I?

Cenci [*addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture*]. Who moves? Who speaks?
[*turning to the Company*]
't is nothing,
Enjoy yourselves.—Beware! For my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[*The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.*]

Beatrice. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What, altho' tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?
What, if 't is he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,

The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world?
O think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! O think!
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crusht us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears
To soften him, and when this could not be
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights
And lifted up to God, the father of all,
Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard
I have still borne,—until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman,
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's Chamberlain,
Camillo, thou art chief justiciary,
Take us away!

CENCI [*he has been conversing with* CAMILLO *during the first part of* BEATRICE'S *speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances*]. I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

BEATRICE [*not noticing the words of* CENCI]. Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form

Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
O God! That I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! And that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

CAMILLO. A bitter wish for one so young and gentle;
Can we do nothing?

COLONNA. Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy:
Yet I would second any one.

A CARDINAL. And I.

CENCI. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

BEATRICE. Retire thou impious man! Ay hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honor and obedience
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step:
Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves, and thee.

CENCI. My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.
Good-night, farewell; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.
Another time.—

[*Exeunt all but* CENCI *and* BEATRICE.]

My brain is swimming round;
Give me a bowl of wine!
[*To* BEATRICE.] Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou are! Fair and yet terrible;

I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight! [*Exit* BEATRICE.]
Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening; but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do. [*Drinking the wine.*]
Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villany;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well;
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear! [*Exit.*]

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

LUCRETIA. Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O, God Almighty, do thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only thee!
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.
BERNARDO. O more, more,
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep!
LUCRETIA. Alas! Poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?
[*Enter* BEATRICE.]

BEATRICE [*in a hurried voice*]. Did he pass this way?
Have you seen him, brother?
Ah! No, that is his step upon the stairs;
'T is nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night.

[*Enter a Servant.*]

Almighty God, how merciful thou art!
'T is but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news?
SERVANT. My master bids me say, the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened. [*Giving a paper.*]
And he demands at what hour 't were secure
To visit you again?
LUCRETIA. At the Ave Mary.
[*Exit Servant.*]
So, daughter, our last hope has failed; Ah me!
How pale you look; you tremble, and you stand
Wrapt in some fixed and fearful meditation,
As if one thought were over strong for you:
Your eyes have a chill glare; O, dearest child!
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.
BEATRICE. You see I am not mad: I speak to you.
LUCRETIA. You talkt of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
Then when he smiled, and cried, My sons are dead!
Every one lookt in his neighbor's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it past I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words

Checkt his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus have you ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence:
What can have thus subdued it? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

BEATRICE. What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'T were better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,
Yet never—Oh! Before worse comes of it
'T were wise to die: it ends in that at last.

LUCRETIA. O talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not after that accursèd feast
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

BERNARDO. O sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

BEATRICE [*speaking very slowly with a forced calmness*].
It was one word, Mother, one little word;
One look, one smile. [*Wildly.*] Oh! He has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten.—He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
And I have never yet despaired—but now!
What could I say? [*Recovering herself.*] Ah! No, 't is nothing new
The sufferings we all share have made me wild:
He only struck and curst me as he past;
He said, he lookt, he did;—nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.

Alas! I am forgetful of my duty,
I should preserve my senses for your sake.
LUCRETIA. Nay, Beatrice; have courage my sweet girl,
If any one despairs it should be I
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil
Shall be remembered only as a dream.
BEATRICE. Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead Mother plead against my soul
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more, even, than a mother's love!
BERNARDO. And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live
In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
O never think that I will leave you, Mother!
LUCRETIA. My dear, dear children!

[*Enter* CENCI, *suddenly.*]

CENCI. What, Beatrice here!
Come hither!

[*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*]

Nay, hide not your face, 't is fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow

On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain.
BEATRICE [*wildly, staggering towards the door*]. O that
the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!
CENCI. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you—from this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,
[*To* BERNARDO.]
Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!
[*Exeunt* BEATRICE *and* BERNARDO.]
[*Aside.*] So much has past between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful.—'T is an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive:
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in . . .
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!
LUCRETIA [*advancing timidly towards him*]. O husband!
Pray forgive poor Beatrice.
She meant not any ill.
CENCI. Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?
Whom in one night merciful God cut off:
Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.
You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses?—This failing,

How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And he had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of his decree enregistered in heaven?
Oh, no! You said not this?

LUCRETIA. So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with!

CENCI. If you dare speak that wicked lie again
I 'll kill you. What! It was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were bolder than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

LUCRETIA. Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed anything
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

CENCI. Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you:
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things—not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out: you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella:
'T is safely walled, and moated round about:
Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak.—Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey! [*Exit* LUCRETIA.]
The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window panes:

It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears,
And every little corner, nook, and hole
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?
'T is she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror: if there be a sun in heaven
She shall not dare to look upon its beams;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me: I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quencht in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done! [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter* CAMILLO *and* GIACOMO, *in conversation.*

CAMILLO. There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing—
GIACOMO. Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged, sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained to no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,

An hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require?—
CAMILLO. Nay, there is reason in your plea; 't were hard.
GIACOMO. 'T is hard for a firm man to bear: but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father
Without a bond or witness to the deed:
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose
And stretch authority beyond the law?
CAMILLO. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand; he frowned and said,
"Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality."

[*Enter* ORSINO.]

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.
ORSINO. What words?
GIACOMO. Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me, at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink.—But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable tortures of this land,

Galeaz, Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on the meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?
CAMILLO. Why, if they would petition to the Pope
I see not how he could refuse it—yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 't were, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay. [*Exit* CAMILLO.]
GIACOMO. But you, Orsino,
Have the petition: wherefore not present it?
ORSINO. I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers, and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle
Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.
GIACOMO. My friend, that palace walking devil Gold
Has whispered silence to his Holiness:
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would— [*Stops abruptly.*]
ORSINO. What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover:
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile;
A father who is all a tyrant seems,
Were the profaner for his sacred name.
GIACOMO. Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust

Imagination with such fantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words,
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye.—My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

ORSINO. But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected—

GIACOMO. Spare me now!
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

ORSINO. Farewell!—Be your thoughts better or more bold.

[*Exit* GIACOMO.]

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement:
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 't is a trick of this same family
To analyze their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets: for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes:
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,

To which I grow half reconciled. I 'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.
[*After a pause.*] Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered?—Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words;
And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee
Could but despise danger and gold and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape . . .
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head
My hot palm scorches it: her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
From the unraveled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved:
And she!—Once more take courage my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matcht with thee?

I have such foresight as assures success:
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instruments of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts
Till it become his slave . . . as I will do. [*Exit.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.* LUCRETIA, *to her enter* BEATRICE.

BEATRICE [*she enters staggering, and speaks wildly*]. Reach
me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt;
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me . . .
I see but indistinctly.
LUCRETIA. My sweet child,
You have no wound; 't is only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow . . . Alas! Alas!
What has befallen?
BEATRICE. How comes this hair
undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels. . . . My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is fleckt with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapors such as the dead breathe

In charnel pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me . . . 't is substantial, heavy, thick,
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt!
[*More wildly.*] No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! [*A pause.*]
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'T is gone; and yet its burden remains here
O'er these dull eyes . . . upon this weary heart!
O world! O life! O day! O misery!

LUCRETIA. What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not:
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung . . .

BEATRICE [*frantically*]. Like Parricide . . .
Misery has killed its father: yet its father
Never like mine . . . O God! What thing am I?

LUCRETIA. My dearest child, what has your father done?

BEATRICE [*doubtfully*]. Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.
[*Aside.*] She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.
[*To* LUCRETIA, *in a slow, subdued voice.*] Do you know
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story

So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined . . . no, it cannot be!
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As . . . [*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*]
Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest . . . Mother!
LUCRETIA. Oh!
My sweet child, know you . . .
BEATRICE. Yet speak it not:
For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linkt with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace:
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice.
I have talkt some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me: from this point of time,
I am . . . [*Her voice dies away faintly.*]
LUCRETIA. Alas! What has befallen thee, child?
What has thy father done?
BEATRICE. What have I done?
Am I not innocent? Is it my crime
That one with white hair and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years
As parents only dare, should call himself
My father, yet should be!—Oh, what am I?
What name, what place, what memory shall be mine?
What retrospects, outliving even despair?
LUCRETIA. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child:
We know that death alone can make us free;
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?

Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

BEATRICE. 'T is the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
What, yet I know not . . . something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done:
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never any thing will move me more.
But now!—O blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling thro' these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime, and punishment
By which I suffer . . . no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above
Who sees and permits evil, and so die:
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

LUCRETIA. It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

BEATRICE. I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me: I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror: of all words
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? For there is none to tell
My misery: if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,

And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward . . . Oh, which
Have I deserved?

LUCRETIA. The peace of innocence;
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

BEATRICE. Ay, death . . .
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest
May mock thee, unavenged . . . it shall not be!
Self-murder . . . no, that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it:—Oh! In this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that thro' which I suffer.

[*Enter* ORSINO.]

[*She approaches him solemnly.*] Welcome, Friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

ORSINO. And what is he who has thus injured you?

BEATRICE. The man they call my father: a dread name.

ORSINO. It cannot be . . .

BEATRICE. What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;

Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!

ORSINO. Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

BEATRICE. Oh, ice-hearted counselor!
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and that done,
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core; ay, lay all bare
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story;
A mock, a bye-word, an astonishment:—
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapt
In hideous hints . . . Oh, most assured redress!

ORSINO. You will endure it then?

BEATRICE. Endure?—Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.
[*Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.*] Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?

ORSINO. Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayest become
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

BEATRICE [*to herself*]. Mighty death!

Thou double-visaged shadow? Only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter!

[*She retires absorbed in thought.*]

LUCRETIA. If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge . . .

ORSINO. Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime . . .

LUCRETIA. But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? If because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? O God!
If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

ORSINO. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

LUCRETIA. How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not . . . but I think it might be good
To . . .

ORSINO. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonor, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge:
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel . . .

LUCRETIA. For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need.

[BEATRICE *advances.*]

ORSINO. Then . . .
BEATRICE. Peace, Orsino!
And, honored Lady, while I speak, I pray
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement; both for what is past,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburdened soul,
And be . . . what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talkt with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.
ORSINO. I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.
LUCRETIA. You think we should devise
His death?
BEATRICE. And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.
ORSINO. And yet most cautious.
LUCRETIA. For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.
BEATRICE. Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?
ORSINO. I know two dull,
fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,

The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

LUCRETIA. To-morrow before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrives there . . .

BEATRICE. He must not arrive.

ORSINO. Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

LUCRETIA. The sun will scarce be set.

BEATRICE. But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 't is rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life; yet clinging, leans;
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall: beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns . . . below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'T is twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

ORSINO. Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until . . .

BEATRICE. What sound is that?

LUCRETIA. Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned . . . Make some excuse for being here.
BEATRICE [*To* ORSINO, *as she goes out.*]
That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.]
ORSINO. What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither: let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.
[*Enter* GIACOMO, *in a hurried manner.*]
How! Have you ventured hither? Know you then
That Cenci is from home?
GIACOMO. I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.
ORSINO. Great God!
Weigh you the danger of this rashness?
GIACOMO. Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the opprest;
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe:
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Tho' all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair name; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heapt on me by thee,
Or I will . . . God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?
ORSINO. Be calm, dear friend.

GIACOMO. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promist to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose.
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was toucht, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too: but soon returned again;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
"Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
What you in one night squander were enough
For months!" I lookt, and saw that home was hell.
And to that hell will I return no more
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
I will, reversing nature's law . . .

ORSINO. Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.
GIACOMO. Then . . . Are you
not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?
My wrongs were then less. That word parricide,
Altho' I am resolved, haunts me like fear.
ORSINO. It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it: what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplisht.
GIACOMO. Is he dead?
ORSINO. His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.
GIACOMO. What outrage?
ORSINO. That she speaks
not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do,
From her fixt paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this; that whilst her step-mother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints; both self-misunderstood
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told before she spoke it, he must die· . . .
GIACOMO. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,

Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other! Is there made
Ravage of thee? O heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

ORSINO. Not so; some accident might interpose
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
All is contrived; success is so assured
That . . .

[*Enter* BEATRICE.]

BEATRICE. 'T is my brother's voice! You know me not?

GIACOMO. My sister, my lost sister!

BEATRICE. Lost indeed!
I see Orsino has talkt with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
He might return: yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts
Make thine hard, brother. Answer not . . . farewell.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A mean Apartment in Giacomo's House.*
GIACOMO *alone.*

GIACOMO. 'T is midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

[*Thunder, and the sound of a storm.*]

What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so the shaft

Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep:
They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which was most necessary. Oh,
Thou unreplenished lamp! whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine:
But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 't is the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold:
It is the form that molded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death:
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgment seat!
[*A bell strikes.*] One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet . . . 't is Orsino's step . . .

[*Enter* Orsino.]

Speak!

Orsino. I am come
To say he has escaped.

Giacomo. Escaped!

Orsino. And safe
Within Petrella. He past by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

GIACOMO. Are we the fools of such contingencies?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,
Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done
But my repentance.
ORSINO. See, the lamp is out.
GIACOMO. If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever?
No, I am hardened.
ORSINO. Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Altho' our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.
GIACOMO [*lighting the lamp*]. And yet once quencht I cannot thus relume
My father's life: do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?
ORSINO. Once gone
You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguisht years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor . . .
GIACOMO. O, speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.
ORSINO. There is no need of that. Listen: you know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due?

GIACOMO. I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.
ORSINO. Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.
GIACOMO. Only to talk?
ORSINO. The moments
which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death: ere then
They must have talkt, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end . . .
GIACOMO. Listen! What
sound is that?
ORSINO. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack: nought else.
GIACOMO. It is my wife complaining in her sleep:
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.
ORSINO. Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapt in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.
GIACOMO If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands . . .
ORSINO. Why, that were well. I must be gone; good-night:
When next we meet—may all be done!
GIACOMO. And all
Forgotten: Oh, that I had never been! [*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

Scene I.—*An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella. Enter* Cenci.

Cenci. She comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquisht and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay: yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? Keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? Tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 't is her stubborn will
Which by its own consent shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

[*Enter* Lucretia.]

Thou loathèd wretch!
Hide thee from my abhorrence; fly, begone!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucretia. Oh,
Husband! I pray for thine own wretched sake
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Thro' crimes, and thro' the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage: so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

Cenci. What! like her sister who has found a home
To mock my hate from with prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,

Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

LUCRETIA. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
"Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart!"

CENCI. Why—such
things are . . .
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'T is plain I have been favored from above,
For when I curst my sons they died.—Ay . . . so . . .
As to the right or wrong that's talk . . . repentance . . .
Repentance is an easy moment's work,
And more depends on God than me. Well . . . well . . .
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.

[*A pause;* LUCRETIA *approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks.*]
One, two;
Ay . . . Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave:
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulcher of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna,
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries;
My parchments and all records of my wealth,
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name;

Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure . . . [*Going.*]

LUCRETIA. [*Stops him.*] Oh, stay!
it was a feint:
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

CENCI. That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice worse terrors are in store
To bend her to my will.

LUCRETIA. Oh! to what will?
What cruel sufferings more than she has known
Canst thou inflict?

CENCI. Andrea! Go call my daughter,
[*To* LUCRETIA.] And if she comes not tell her that I come.
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Thro' infamies unheard of among men:
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be . . . What? Canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;

Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

[*Enter* ANDREA.]

ANDREA. The Lady Beatrice . . .
CENCI. Speak, pale
slave! What
Said she?
ANDREA. My Lord, 't was what she lookt; she said:
"Go tell my father that I see the gulf
Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,
I will not." [*Exit* ANDREA.]
CENCI. Go thou quick, Lucretia,
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent: and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her.
[*Exit* LUCRETIA.]
With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child
But he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak? For I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

[*Enter* LUCRETIA.]

Well; what? Speak, wretch!
LUCRETIA. She said,
"I cannot come;
Go tell my father that I see a torrent
Of his own blood raging between us."
CENCI [*kneeling*]. God!
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,

Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If nurst by thy selectest dew of love
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake,
As thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad: parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathèd lameness! All-beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!

LUCRETIA. Peace! Peace!
For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants he punishes such prayers.

CENCI [*leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven*]. He does his will, I mine! This in addition,
That if she have a child . . .

LUCRETIA. Horrible thought!

CENCI. That if she ever have a child; and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation! May it be
A hideous likeness of herself, that as
From a distorting mirror, she may see
Her image mixt with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,

Turning her mother's love to misery:
And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural.
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonored grave.
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in Heaven.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.]

I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offenses of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

[*Enter* LUCRETIA.]

What? Speak!

LUCRETIA. She bids thee curse;
And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul . . .

CENCI. She would not
come. 'T is well,
I can do both: first take what I demand,
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee: and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.]

It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! Oh, thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of Heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go

First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel: and then . . .
O, multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall with a spirit of unnatural life
Stir and be quickened . . . even as I am now. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*Before the Castle of Petrella. Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *above on the Ramparts.*

BEATRICE. They come not yet.
LUCRETIA. 'T is scarce midnight.
BEATRICE. How slow
Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed time!
LUCRETIA. The minutes pass . . .
If he should wake before the deed is done?
BEATRICE. O mother! He must never wake again.
What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.
LUCRETIA. 'T is true he spoke
Of death and judgment with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession! . . .
BEATRICE. Oh!
Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity
To the amount of his offenses.

[*Enter* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO, *below.*]

LUCRETIA. See,
They come.

BEATRICE. All mortal things must
hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE *from above.*]

OLIMPIO. How feel you to this work?
MARZIO. As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market price
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.
OLIMPIO. It is the white reflection of your own,
Which you call pale.
MARZIO. Is that their natural hue?
OLIMPIO. Or 't is my hate and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.
MARZIO. You are inclined then to this business?
OLIMPIO. Ay.
If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

[*Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA, *below.*]

Noble ladies!.
BEATRICE. Are ye resolved?
OLIMPIO. Is he asleep?
MARZIO. Is all
Quiet?
LUCRETIA. I mixt an opiate with
his drink:
He sleeps so soundly . . .
BEATRICE. That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed?
OLIMPIO. We are resolved.
MARZIO. As to the how this act
Be warranted it rests with you.

BEATRICE. Well, follow!
OLIMPIO. Hush! Hark! What noise is that?
MARZIO. Ha! some one comes!
BEATRICE. Ye conscience-stricken
cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the Castle. Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA.

LUCRETIA. They are about it now.
BEATRICE. Nay, it is done.
LUCRETIA. I have not heard him groan.
BEATRICE. He will not groan.
LUCRETIA. What sound is that?
BEATRICE. List! 't is the
tread of feet
About his bed.
LUCRETIA. My God!
If he be now a cold stiff corpse . . .
BEATRICE. O, fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone:
The act seals all.

[*Enter* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.]

Is it accomplished?
MARZIO. What?
OLIMPIO. Did you not call?
BEATRICE. When?
OLIMPIO. Now.
BEATRICE. I ask if all is over?
OLIMPIO. We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin gray hair, his stern and reverent brow,

His veinèd hands crosst on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

MARZIO. But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave
And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Toucht the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, "God! hear, O, hear,
A father's curse! What, art thou not our father?"
And then he laught. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

BEATRICE. Miserable slaves!
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers!
Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation: it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And when a deed where mercy insults Heaven . . .
Why do I talk?

[*Snatching a dagger from one of them and raising it.*]

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
She murdered her own father, I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

OLIMPIO. Stop, for God's sake!

MARZIO. I will go back and kill him.

OLIMPIO. Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

BEATRICE. Take it! Depart! Return!

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.]

How pale thou art!
We do but that which 't were a deadly crime
To leave undone.

LUCRETIA. Would it were done!

BEATRICE. Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and Hell
Have swallowed up the vapor they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely thro' my veins. Hark!

[*Enter* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.]

He is . . .

OLIMPIO. Dead!

MARZIO. We strangled him that there might be no blood;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 't will seem it fell.

BEATRICE [*giving them a bag of coin*]. Here, take this gold,
and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made me tremble, wear thou this!

[*Clothes him in a rich mantle.*]

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state: so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent: this deed is none.

[*A horn is sounded.*]

LUCRETIA. Hark! 't is the castle horn; my God! it sounds
Like the last trump.

BEATRICE. Some tedious guest is coming.

LUCRETIA. The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court; fly, hide yourselves!

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.]

BEATRICE. Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now:
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm: all ill is surely past.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Another Apartment in the Castle. Enter on one side the* LEGATE SAVELLA, *introduced by a Servant, and on the other* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

SAVELLA. Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci; doth he sleep?

LUCRETIA [*in a hurried and confused manner*]. I think he sleeps;
Yet wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile,
He is a wicked and a wrathful man;
Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well; indeed it were not well.
Wait till day break . . . [*aside*] O, I am deadly sick!

SAVELLA. I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly; such my commission is.

LUCRETIA [*with increased agitation*]. I dare not rouse him:
I know none who dare . . .
'T were perilous; . . . you might as safely waken
A serpent; or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

SAVELLA. Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

LUCRETIA [*aside*]. O, terror! O, despair!
[*To Bernardo*] Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber.

[*Exeunt* SAVELLA *and* BERNARDO.]

[*Enter* BEATRICE.]

BEATRICE. 'T is a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

LUCRETIA. Oh, agony of fear!
Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper as they past
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact;
O, horrible, 't is all discovered!

BEATRICE. Mother,
What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'T is like a truant child
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's center. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock
But shakes it not.

[*A cry within and tumult.*]

VOICES. Murder! Murder! Murder!

[*Enter* BERNARDO *and* SAVELLA.]

SAVELLA [*to his followers*]. Go search the castle round; sound the alarm;
Look to the gates that none escape!

BEATRICE. What now?

BERNARDO. I know not what to say . . . my father's dead.
BEATRICE. How; dead! he only sleeps; you mistake, brother
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
'T is wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not dead?
BERNARDO. Dead; murdered.
LUCRETIA [*with extreme agitation*]. Oh no, no,
He is not murdered though he may be dead;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.
SAVELLA. Hā! Is it so?
BEATRICE. My Lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well:
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror:
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.]
SAVELLA. Can you suspect who may have murdered him?
BERNARDO. I know not what to think.
SAVELLA. Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death?
BERNARDO. Alas!
I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done;
My mother, and my sister, and myself.
SAVELLA. 'T is strange! There were clear marks of violence.
I found the old man's body in the moonlight
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber,
Among the branches of a pine: he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heapt
And effortless; 't is true there was no blood . . .
Favor me, Sir; it much imports your house
That all should be made clear; to tell the ladies
That I request their presence.

[*Exit* BERNARDO.]

[*Enter* GUARDS *bringing in* MARZIO.]

GUARD. We have one.

OFFICER. My Lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci:
Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon
Betrayed them to our notice: the other fell
Desperately fighting.

SAVELLA. What does he confess?

OFFICER. He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him
May speak.

SAVELLA. Their language is at least sincere. [*Reads.*]
"TO THE LADY BEATRICE.—That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write. . . . Thy devoted servant,

"ORSINO."

[*Enter* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* BERNARDO.]

Knowest thou this writing, Lady?

BEATRICE. No.

SAVELLA. Nor thou?

LUCRETIA. [*Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.*] Where was it found? What is it? It should be
Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror
Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

SAVELLA. Is it so?
Is it true, Lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

BEATRICE. Not hate, 't was more than hate:
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

SAVELLA. There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.
BEATRICE. What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.
SAVELLA. I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.
LUCRETIA. O, not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.
BEATRICE. Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My Lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless. . . . Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie;
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'T is ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? Unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.
SAVELLA. You own
That you desired his death?
BEATRICE. It would have been
A crime no less than his, if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'T is true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
Ay, I even knew . . . for God is wise and just,
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'T is true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven . . . now what of this?

SAVELLA. Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both:
I judge thee not.
BEATRICE. And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life: the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'T is most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free; stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum: let them have been enough:
Leave us the wreck we have.
SAVELLA. I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome:
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.
LUCRETIA. O, not to Rome! O, take us not to Rome!
BEATRICE. Why not to Rome, dear mother? There as here
Our innocence is as an armèd heel
To trample accusation. God is there
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured and the weak;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean
On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot, as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother; will you come?
LUCRETIA. Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony!

Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart! O, misery!
[*She faints, and is borne out.*]

SAVELLA. She faints: an ill appearance this.

BEATRICE. My Lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not: a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness:
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord;
Our suite will join yours in the court below. [*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in Orsino's Palace. Enter* ORSINO *and* GIACOMO.

GIACOMO. Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
O, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done, had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
O, that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shone
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds

Of conscience to their prey! Alas! Alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.
ORSINO. It has turned out unluckily, in truth.
GIACOMO. To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul
Which might have quencht in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes . . .
ORSINO. You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.
GIACOMO. O, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire . . .
ORSINO. 'T is thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve;
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess 't is fear disguised
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe?
GIACOMO. How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.
ORSINO. I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.
GIACOMO. Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?

She, who alone in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety;
Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,
Even to this gulf? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But, no, defend thyself; [*Drawing.*]
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with.

ORSINO. Put up your weapon.
Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think,
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak
The ministers of justice wait below:
They grant me these brief moments. Now if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 't were best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

GIACOMO. O, generous friend! How canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!

ORSINO. That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor?

[*Exit* GIACOMO.]

I 'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting

At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
That I might rid me both of him and them.
I thought to act a solemn comedy
Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill
As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which grasp't and snapt the threads of my device
And turned it to a net of ruin . . . Ha!

[*A shout is heard.*]

Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapt in a vile disguise;
Rags on my back, and a false innocence
Upon my face, thro' the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'T is easy then
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life, fashioned on old desires,
To change the honors of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered . . . Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? Shall I be the slave
Of . . . what? A word? which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves;
As men wear daggers not for self-offense.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye? [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Hall of Justice.* CAMILLO, JUDGES, *etc., are discovered seated;* MARZIO *is led in.*

FIRST JUDGE. Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty?

I demand who were the participators
In your offense? Speak truth and the whole truth.
MARZIO. My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing;
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.
SECOND JUDGE. Away with him!
FIRST JUDGE. Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner,
That you would bandy lovers' talk with it
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!
MARZIO. Spare me! O, spare! I will confess.
FIRST JUDGE. Then speak.
MARZIO. I strangled him in his sleep.
FIRST JUDGE. Who urged you to it?
MARZIO. His own son, Giacomo, and the young prelate
Orsino sent me to Petrella; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.
FIRST JUDGE. This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there,
Lead forth the prisoner!

[*Enter* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*]

Look upon this man;
When did you see him last?
BEATRICE. We never saw him.
MARZIO. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.
BEATRICE. I know thee! How? where? when?
MARZIO. You know 't was I
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold
And bade me thrive: how I have thriven, you see.

You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

[BEATRICE *advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.*]

O, dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound: 't was torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this let me be led to death.

BEATRICE. Poor wretch, I pity thee: yet stay awhile.

CAMILLO. Guards, lead him not away.

BEATRICE. Cardinal Camillo,
You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom: can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply:
And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told: "Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life:"—and tho'
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein
Are changed to you, thro' your exceeding grief,
Yet you would say, "I confess anything:"
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonorable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.

CAMILLO [*much moved*]. What shall we think, my Lords?
Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.

JUDGE. Yet she must be tortured.

CAMILLO. I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
(If he now lived he would be just her age;
His hair, too, was her color, and his eyes
Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy!

JUDGE. Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law; nay even
To stretch a point against the criminals.
The prisoners stand accused of parricide
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

BEATRICE. What evidence? This man's?

JUDGE. Even so.

BEATRICE [*to Marzio*]. Come near. And who art thou thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men
To kill the innocent?

MARZIO. I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

BEATRICE. Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask.

[*Turning to the Judges.*]
I prithee mark
His countenance: unlike bold calumny
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.

[*To Marzio.*] What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?
MARZIO. Oh!
Spare me! My brain swims round . . . I cannot speak . . .
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me!
I am a guilty miserable wretch;
I have said all I know; now, let me die!
BEATRICE. My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern, as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed; this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the heft,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? That with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution, as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust; and, see, he lives!
[*Turning to* MARZIO.] And thou . . .
Marzio. Oh, spare me! Speak to me no more!
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.
[*To the Judges.*] I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.
CAMILLO. Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice,
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.
BEATRICE. O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay:
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years

And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul;
And my untainted fame; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart;
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great Father, who in pity and love,
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation;
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth:
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: "My maker,
I have done this and more; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
And because she endured what never any
Guilty or innocent endured before:
Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought;
Because thy hand at length did rescue her;
I with my words killed her and all her kin."
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 't is to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is,
Hear me, great God! I swear, most innocent,
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply

To what I ask: Am I, or am I not
A parricide?

MARZIO. Thou art not!

JUDGE. What is this?

MARZIO. I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'T is I alone am guilty.

JUDGE. Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

MARZIO. Torture me as ye will:
A keener pain has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent!
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me,
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin.

[*Exit* MARZIO, *guarded.*]

CAMILLO. What say ye now, my Lords?

JUDGE. Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

CAMILLO. Yet stained with blood.

JUDGE [*to* BEATRICE]. Know you this paper, Lady?

BEATRICE. Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;
Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what,
And therefore on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us?

[*Enter an Officer.*]

OFFICER. Marzio's dead.

JUDGE. What did he say?

OFFICER. Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,

As one who baffles a deep adversary;
And holding his breath, died.
JUDGE. There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners,
Who yet remain stubborn.
CAMILLO. I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.
JUDGE. Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells;
And be the engines ready: for this night
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE *is discovered asleep on a couch. Enter* BERNARDO.

BERNARDO. How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay, me!
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus . . . wake! awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?
BEATRICE [*awakening*]. I was just dreaming
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.
BERNARDO. Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! O God!
How shall I tell?
BEATRICE. What wouldst thou
tell, sweet brother?

BERNARDO. Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say
My heart will break.
BEATRICE. See now, thou
mak'st me weep:
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.
BERNARDO. They have confest; they could endure no more
The tortures . . .
BEATRICE. Ha! What was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

[*Enter* JUDGE *with* LUCRETIA *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*]

Ignoble hearts!
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendor laid in dust?
And that eternal honor which should live
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a bye-word? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave . . . what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou,

Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'T is but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

GIACOMO. They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

LUCRETIA. Oh, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die;
And after death, God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

BERNARDO. If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

JUDGE. Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures . . .

BEATRICE. Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapt the blood his master shed . . . not me!
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
And of the soul; ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves;
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the opprest . . . such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?

JUDGE. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?
BEATRICE. Or wilt thou rather tax high judging God
That he permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will;
No other pains shall force another word.
JUDGE. She is convicted, but has not confest.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here!
BEATRICE. Oh! tear him not away!
JUDGE. Guards, do your duty.
BERNARDO [*embracing* BEATRICE]. Oh! would ye divide
Body from soul?
OFFICER. That is the headsman's
business.

[*Exeunt all but* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE *and* GIACOMO.]

GIACOMO. Have I confest? Is it all over now?
No hope! No refuge! O weak, wicked tongue
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister;
Ay, thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world, to that which I
So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!
Destitute, helpless, and I . . . Father! God!
Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus! . . .

[*Covers his face and weeps.*]

LUCRETIA. O my child!
To what a dreadful end are we all come!
Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain
Those torments? Oh, that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears,
Which flow and feel not!

BEATRICE. What 't was weak to do,
'T is weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! Bear up!
O dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile:
Your eyes look pale, hollow and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live: lie down!
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! They are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
Farewell! Heigho!
What is this whispers low?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain;
When to wake? Never again.
O World! Farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart.

[*The scene closes.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Hall of the Prison. Enter* CAMILLO *and* BERNARDO.

CAMILLO. The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He lookt as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom: not a man.
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice:
"Which among ye defended their old father
Killed in his sleep?" Then to another: "Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place; 't is well."
He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
And said these three words, coldly: "They must die."

BERNARDO. And yet you left him not?

CAMILLO. I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied: "Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.

Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment;
Here is their sentence; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

BERNARDO. O God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh, wait till I return! [*Rushes out.*]

CAMILLO. Alas! poor boy!
A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

[*Enter* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*]

BEATRICE. I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

CAMILLO. May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

BEATRICE [*wildly*].
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy, ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—

How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be . . .
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Maskt in gray hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? Even tho' dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?

LUCRETIA. Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ: ere night,
Think, we shall be in Paradise.

BEATRICE. 'T is past!
Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill:
How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God,

I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

[*During the latter speeches* GIACOMO *has retired conversing with* CAMILLO, *who now goes out;* GIACOMO *advances.*]

GIACOMO. Know you not, Mother . . . Sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA. Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years:
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

BEATRICE. Yet both will soon be cold.
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope:
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring:
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free;
Now stench and blackness yawns, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die:
Since such is the reward of innocent lives;
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk thro' a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep; 't were just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!

Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake,
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now . . .

[BERNARDO *rushes in.*]

BERNARDO. Oh, horrible,
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one . . . What if 't were fancy?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 't were only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .
Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister; and thou, Mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .
Dead! The sweet bond broken!

[*Enter* CAMILLO *and Guards.*]

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted . . . white . . . cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh, let me hear
You speak!

BEATRICE. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now:
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child,
For thine own sake be constant to the love

Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Tho' wrapt in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And tho'
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stampt on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!

BERNARDO. I cannot say, farewell!

CAMILLO. O Lady Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 't is very well.

THE END.

THE NATURE OF MODERN TRAGEDY

Classical tragedy, as we have seen, emphasizes the consequences of action which opposes the stern decrees of Destiny; Shakespearean tragedy stresses the inherent worth of character; modern tragedy shifts the emphasis away from both and presents a new interpretation of tragic conflict. Modern tragedy, in the main, does not attempt, or attain the heroic or the sublime; instead of revealing human nature in its ideal manifestations, instead of creating an imaginative picture of a higher reality, as do the plays of Sophocles and Shakespeare, it is content to present realistic pictures not only of ordinary humanity, but of those below the average. Democratic in its intent, it will despise no living creature as a possible subject for dramatic portrayal.

This choice of the modern dramatist may be partly explained as a natural reaction from the confinement of tragedy to the fates of heroes and kings. As early as the 18th century Nicholas Rowe, in the prologue to *The Fair Penitent,* voiced this complaint:

> "Long has the Fate of Kings and Empires been
> The common business of the Tragic Scene,
> As if Misfortune made the Throne her Seat,
> And none could be unhappy but the Great.
> . . . . . .
> Stories like these with Wonder we may hear
> But far remote and in a higher Sphere
> We ne'er can pity what we ne'er can share."

and Lessing expressed a similar feeling when he wrote:

"The fortunes of those whose circumstances most resemble our own naturally penetrate most deeply into our hearts and if we pity kings we pity them as human beings, not as kings."

The creed of the tragic dramatist of to-day is well expressed by Masefield, a typical representative, in his poem, *A Consecration:*

"Not of the princes and prelates with periwigged charioteers
Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the years,—
Rather the scorned—the rejected—the men hemmed in with the spears;

Not the ruler for me, but the ranker, the tramp of the road,
The slave with the sack on his shoulders pricked on with the goad,
The man with too weighty a burden, too weary a load.

Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth,
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth;—
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and the scum of the earth!"

This seems a far cry from the injunction of an earlier apostle: "Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things".

The modern democratic spirit is also well summarized by one of Eugene O'Neill's characters in *Marco Millions:*

"that one's loving kindness should embrace all forms of life, that one's compassion should suffer with the suffering, that one's sympathy should understand all things, and last that one's judgment should regard all persons and things as of equal importance".

A new conception of man's place in the universe as revealed by modern science is largely responsible for this cry for universal sympathy. The Greek and Christian views of life are anthropocentric; man is regarded as the center of the cosmos; his struggles as an individual, his purposes, dreams, and aspirations are deemed of prime importance. God made him, said the Psalmist "a little lower than the angels". Shakespeare voiced a similar sentiment in Hamlet's speech:

"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

Modern science, however, cast a chill over such enthusiasm. In the vast galaxies of the astronomical heavens the earth dwindled to a little mud speck whirling around a tenth rate sun, and man, looking back on his slow emergence out of the slime of the animal world, saw his significance shrinking to a mere trouble of midgets. Moreover, he discovered that far from being the lord of creation and the master of life, he was in the clutch of natural forces blind and indifferent to his welfare, that his life was determined by his heredity and environment, over neither of which he possessed control. His natural endowment he inherited from his parents for good or for ill without his asking or choosing. He was born into an economic and social environment, that of his parents, also without his choosing; and he saw himself henceforth as an organism acting or reacting to the impulses of heredity or the impingings of environment. This philosophy of scientific determinism, which provides the formula for most of modern drama, removes the burden of responsibility for evil, crime, weakness, and other causes of tragic failure from the individual, and places it upon nature and society. Archibald Henderson, in his study of this new philosophy, points out that neither the Greeks nor Shakespeare emphasized the environment or social organization as a giant participant in the tragedy of human destiny. Neither Shakespeare, who had little sympathy for the lot of the common man, nor Molière, who exposed the follies and vices of French social life, breathed the air of modern democracy. They did not depict society as the tyrant of the universe, or regard evil and crime as often the product of imperfect social knowledge. The modern dramatist, keenly aware of these causes of suffering and tragedy, has taken upon himself a much greater burden than preceding dramatists assumed. Not content with the rôle of dramatic artist, he has undertaken the task of reforming society, and has created the problem drama as a means of education and propaganda. Instead of a drama of pleasurable

illusion, of chastened pity and sublime awe, he writes a drama of disillusion; hence the critical, satirical, ironic, pessimistic, bitter, but pathetic tone of practically all modern tragedies.

The universe appears to the modern dramatist not as a moral cosmos run by inherently just laws as represented by the Gods against which man may run only to his own disaster, but as a chaos or vast driving of blind and mechanical forces, some of which through science he can bring under his control. The paradox of this view is that the dramatic thinker conceives man to be without freedom, and yet believes most ardently in individualism. The more deterministic his philosophy becomes, the louder grow his cries for the rights of the individual, and the more insistent he is upon sympathy; the more he impresses upon us also the need for a solidarity of men against Nature, and for intelligent control of all natural and social forces that thwart the individual and bring upon him evil and destruction. From the point of view of Nature every human being is as worthy as any other, and we find Hauptmann, the German dramatist, pronouncing a similar equality for art, "Before art as before the law all men are equal"; Spitta goes even so far as to declare that "a barber or a scrub-woman could as fitly be the subject of tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear". Accordingly the characters of modern tragedy are mostly common people on the bourgeois level or below. Both literature and the stage have poured forth in the last fifty years a stream of peasant, tramp, and slum life, as if our principal attention should be centered upon the exploited, as if we must be made to realize how "the other half lives". This is the picture Gorki draws in *The Lower Depths*. Having taken the whole of humanity to his compassionate bosom, the modern tragedian portrays man not as hero, but as victim. The tragedy of man according to Andrieev in *The Life of Man* (see *Types of Philosophic Drama* in this series) is that he exists at all, or in Gorki's more hopeful words: "Nothing can be conceived that is worse than reality but it is possible to invent something better."

Now whether a victim is crushed by natural forces as in Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, by heredity and environment as in Ibsen's *Ghosts*, by sex antagonism as in Strindberg's *The Father*, or by the ruthless machinery of Society, as in Gals-

worthy's *Justice,* the principal emotions aroused are in varying proportions, insight, pathos, and indignation rather than Aristotelian pity and fear. Few of the characters in modern drama give strenuous battle against their environment. Few are actuated by any belief, or reveal any possibility that human virtue should be equal or superior to human calamity. Most of them are weaklings, degenerates, or unintelligent creatures doomed before they start, and through mistakes, frustration, accident, frailty or disease, are ground to pieces before our eyes in a remorseless mill of existence. Yet, however weak, foolish or incompetent they may be, they are still human beings who cannot be ignored, especially since society is largely responsible for what they are. If the pathos of their failures can be brought home, if insight, sympathy, and indignation can be aroused, these emotions are the indispensable first impulses we must feel before we can be stirred to alleviate their hapless lot. The modern dramatist seems to believe that it is we, the spectators, who are the villains of modern drama, and that we must be convicted of our sins. The Greeks saw the Tragic Muse as a Goddess, the Moderns too often degrade her into a mere Sister of Mercy by narrowing the range of emotional appeal, by eschewing characters of intelligence, and ability, and by centering attention upon the mediocre, the lowly, or the oppressed. Under the leadership of Ibsen, nearly every modern dramatist has written plays of this kind: In Russia, Tolstoi's *Power of Darkness,* and Gorki's *The Lower Depths;* in Germany, Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise* and *The Weavers,* Sudermann's *Magda,* and *The Fires of St. John;* in Spain, Echegeray's *The Great Galeoto,* and Guimera's *Marta of the Lowlands;* in Sweden, Strindberg's *The Father;* in France, Becque's *The Vultures,* and Brieux's *Damaged Goods;* in England, Masefield's *Tragedy of Nan,* Galsworthy's *Silver Box* and *Justice;* and in America, Clyde Fitch's *The City,* Eugene Walter's, *The Easiest Way,* and Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* and *Different.* In his latest drama, *Strange Interlude,* which is now crowding the theatre, O'Neill has returned from the satiric romance of *Marco Millions* to the naturalistic formula typical of modern tragedy. This list might easily be expanded both in authors and plays.

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GHOSTS

BY

HENRIK IBSEN

(1891)

INTRODUCTION

Oswald, in Ibsen's *Ghosts*, is an outstanding instance of a victim in modern tragedy whose whole career is determined by heredity and environment. From his father, the dissolute Captain Alving, he received the taint of incurable disease, the ravages of which at the close of the play render him a hopeless imbecile, a constant burden to himself and to his mother, and a useless member of society. Environment, too, has its share in his fate. The gloomy, puritanical Norwegian life of the small town not only drives his father, for sheer boredom, to disgusting excesses within his own home, but makes the son, as well as his half-sister, long for the *joie de vivre* of Paris.

Environment again is responsible for Mrs. Alving's tragedy. Born and brought up in veneration of the strait-laced conventions of small-town morality, she does not have strength enough to break with them. In her one attempt to defy these conventions and to act on the basis of truth rather than of illusions, she is persuaded by Pastor Manders not to violate the sanctity of marriage but to return to her dissolute husband. The result is Oswald. In her desperation to protect the reputation of Captain Alving she continues to manufacture illusions. Her struggle is between the dictates of society, which, as a growing liberal, she feels are faulty, and the stern facts of her existence, which she sees only too plainly, but lacks the courage to cope with. She goes on cherishing illusions (or Ghosts) to the end, hoping against hope, as she sympathetically plies her boy with champagne, that all will be well, only to be faced with the terrible dilemma at the close.

Ibsen leaves to our speculation what she does after the drop of the curtain, as well as what she should have done. Though he effects no tragic relief by this ending, he stimulates ethical discussion, and by horrifying the beholder stabs him wide

awake to the toll which heredity and environment may take from human life. Mary Shaw, who once played *Ghosts* before the miners of Cripple Creek, Colorado, heard a rough miner say to his friend: "Say, Bill, that play made a feller use his cocoanut!" The main purpose of modern tragedy could not be better expressed.

When hereditary disease shall have been done away with, when the dictates of a Pastor Manders no longer produce immorality in the name of morality, will there be enough appeal in Ibsen's *Ghosts* to give it a permanent place among great world tragedies like *Œdipus* and *Othello?* The answer to this question depends upon whether Ibsen, as a dramatic artist, will outlive Ibsen the propagandist of contemporary themes. There are critics who assert that Ibsen as dramatic artist is the Ibsen who will live, and not enough can be said in praise of his dramatic craftsmanship and his ability to delineate truthfully the passions and vices of ordinary, provincial people. His range of themes and range of emotions are, however, alike restricted. Satire, or the showing up of petty people, may be a valuable therapeutic, but it cannot give us the highest enjoyment that dramatic art has to offer.

If, however, we accept Galsworthy's belief that the purpose of the stage is "to produce a sort of mental and moral ferment where vision may be enlarged, imagination enlivened and understanding promoted", we may safely call Ibsen the father of modern dramatists, and *Ghosts* one of the greatest modern tragedies.

TEXT OF THE PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MRS. ALVING, *a widow*

OSWALD ALVING, *her son, an artist*

MANDERS, *the Pastor of the parish*

ENGSTRAND, *a carpenter*

REGINA ENGSTRAND, *his daughter, in Mrs. Alving's service*

[*The action takes place at Mrs. Alving's house on one of the larger fjords of western Norway*]

GHOSTS

ACT I

[Scene.—*A large room looking upon a garden. A door in the left-hand wall, and two in the right. In the middle of the room, a round table with chairs set about it, and books, magazines and newspapers upon it. In the foreground on the left, a window, by which is a small sofa with a work-table in front of it. At the back the room opens into a conservatory rather smaller than the room. From the right-hand side of this a door leads to the garden. Through the large panes of glass that form the outer wall of the conservatory, a gloomy fjord landscape can be discerned, half obscured by steady rain.*

Engstrand *is standing close up to the garden door. His left leg is slightly deformed, and he wears a boot with a clump of wood under the sole.* Regina, *with an empty garden-syringe in her hand, is trying to prevent his coming in.*]

Regina [*below her breath*]. What is it you want? Stay where you are. The rain is dripping off you.

Engstrand. God's good rain, my girl.

Regina. The Devil's own rain, that's what it is!

Engstrand. Lord, how you talk, Regina. [*Takes a few limping steps forward.*] What I wanted to tell you was this—

Regina. Don't clump about like that, stupid! The young master is lying asleep upstairs.

Engstrand. Asleep still? In the middle of the day?

Regina. Well, it's no business of yours.

Engstrand. I was out on the spree last night—

Regina. I don't doubt it.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, we are poor weak mortals, my girl—

REGINA. We are indeed.

ENGSTRAND. —and the temptations of the world are manifold, you know—but, for all that, here I was at my work at half-past five this morning.

REGINA. Yes, yes, but make yourself scarce now. I am not going to stand here as if I had a *rendez-vous* with you.

ENGSTRAND. As if you had a what?

REGINA. I am not going to have any one find you here; so now you know, and you can go.

ENGSTRAND [*coming a few steps nearer*]. Not a bit of it! Not before we have had a little chat. This afternoon I shall have finished my job down at the school house, and I shall be off home to town by to-night's boat.

REGINA [*mutters*]. Pleasant journey to you!

ENGSTRAND. Thanks, my girl. To-morrow is the opening of the Orphanage, and I expect there will be a fine kick-up here and plenty of good strong drink, don't you know. And no one shall say of Jacob Engstrand that he can't hold off when temptation comes in his way.

REGINA. Oho!

ENGSTRAND. Yes, because there will be a lot of fine folk here to-morrow. Parson Manders is expected from town, too.

REGINA. What is more, he's coming to-day.

ENGSTRAND. There you are! And I'm going to be precious careful he doesn't have anything to say against me, do you see?

REGINA. Oh, that's your game, is it?

ENGSTRAND. What do you mean?

REGINA [*with a significant look at him*]. What is it you want to humbug Mr. Manders out of, this time?

ENGSTRAND. Sh! Sh! Are you crazy? Do you suppose *I* would want to humbug Mr. Manders? No, no—Mr. Manders has always been too kind a friend for me to do that. But what I wanted to talk to you about, was my going back home to-night.

REGINA. The sooner you go, the better I shall be pleased.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, only I want to take you with me, Regina.

REGINA [*open-mouthed*]. You want to take me—? What did you say?

ENGSTRAND. I want to take you home with me, I said.

REGINA [*contemptuously*]. You will never get me home with you.

ENGSTRAND. Ah, we shall see about that.

REGINA. Yes, you can be quite certain we *shall* see about that. I, who have been brought up by a lady like Mrs. Alving?—I, who have been treated almost as if I were her own child?—do you suppose I am going home with *you?*—to such a house as yours? Not likely!

ENGSTRAND. What the devil do you mean? Are you setting yourself up against your father, you hussy?

REGINA [*mutters, without looking at him*]. You have often told me I was none of yours.

ENGSTRAND. Bah!—why do you want to pay any attention to that?

REGINA. Haven't you many and many a time abused me and called me a—? For shame!

ENGSTRAND. I'll swear I never used such an ugly word.

REGINA. Oh, it doesn't matter what word you used.

ENGSTRAND. Besides, that was only when I was a bit fuddled—hm! Temptations are manifold in this world, Regina.

REGINA. Ugh!

ENGSTRAND. And it was when your mother was in a nasty temper. I had to find some way of getting my knife into her, my girl. She was always so precious genteel. [*mimicking her.*] "Let go, Jacob! Let me be! Please to remember that I was three years with the Alvings at Rosenvold, and they were people who went to Court!" [*Laughs.*] Bless my soul, she never could forget that Captain Alving got a Court appointment while she was in service here.

REGINA. Poor mother—you worried her into her grave pretty soon.

ENGSTRAND [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Of course, of course; I have got to take the blame for everything.

REGINA [*beneath her breath, as she turns away*]. Ugh—that leg, too!

ENGSTRAND. What are you saying, my girl?

REGINA. *Pied de mouton.*

ENGSTRAND. Is that English?

REGINA. Yes.

ENGSTRAND. You have had a good education out here, and no mistake; and it may stand you in good stead now, Regina.

REGINA [*after a short silence*]. And what was it you wanted me to come to town for?

ENGSTRAND. Need you ask why a father wants his only child? Ain't I a poor lonely widower?

REGINA. Oh, don't come to me with that tale. Why do you want me to go?

ENGSTRAND. Well, I must tell you I am thinking of taking up a new line now.

REGINA [*whistles*]. You have tried that so often—but it has always proved a fool's errand.

ENGSTRAND. Ah, but this time you will just see, Regina! Strike me dead if—

REGINA [*stamping her foot*]. Stop swearing!

ENGSTRAND. Sh! Sh!—you're quite right, my girl, quite right! What I wanted to say was only this, that I have put by a tidy penny out of what I have made by working at this new Orphanage up here.

REGINA. Have you? All the better for you.

ENGSTRAND. What is there for a man to spend his money on, out here in the country?

REGINA. Well, what then?

ENGSTRAND. Well, you see, I thought of putting the money into something that would pay. I thought of some kind of an eating-house for seafaring folk—

REGINA. Heavens!

ENGSTRAND. Oh, a high-class eating-house, of course,—not a pigsty for common sailors. Damn it, no; it would be a

place ships' captains and first mates would come to; really good sort of people, you know.

REGINA. And what should I—?

ENGSTRAND. You would help there. But only to make a show, you know. You wouldn't find it hard work, I can promise you, my girl. You should do exactly as you liked.

REGINA. Oh, yes, quite so!

ENGSTRAND. But we must have some women in the house; that is as clear as daylight. Because in the evening we must make the place a little attractive—some singing and dancing, and that sort of thing. Remember they are seafolk—wayfarers on the waters of life! [*Coming nearer to her.*] Now don't be a fool and stand in your own way, Regina. What good are you going to do here? Will this education, that your mistress has paid for, be of any use? You are to look after the children in the new Home, I hear. Is that the sort of work for you? Are you so frightfully anxious to go and wear out your health and strength for the sake of these dirty brats?

REGINA. No, if things were to go as I want them to, then—. Well, it may happen; who knows? It may happen!

ENGSTRAND. What may happen?

REGINA. Never you mind. Is it much that you have put by, up here?

ENGSTRAND. Taking it all round, I should say about forty or fifty pounds.

REGINA. That's not so bad.

ENGSTRAND. It's enough to make a start with, my girl.

REGINA. Don't you mean to give me any of the money?

ENGSTRAND. No, I'm hanged if I do.

REGINA. Don't you mean to send me as much as a dress-length of stuff, just for once?

ENGSTRAND. Come and live in the town with me and you shall have plenty of dresses.

REGINA. Pooh!—I can get that much for myself, if I have a mind to.

ENGSTRAND. But it's far better to have a father's guiding hand, Regina. Just now I can get a nice house in Little Harbour Street. They don't want much money down for it—and we could make it like a sort of seamen's home, don't you know.

REGINA. But I have no intention of living with you! I have nothing whatever to do with you. So now, be off!

ENGSTRAND. You wouldn't be living with me long, my girl. No such luck—not if you knew how to play your cards. Such a fine wench as you have grown this last year or two—

REGINA. Well—?

ENGSTRAND. It wouldn't be very long before some first mate came along—or perhaps a captain.

REGINA. I don't mean to marry a man of that sort. Sailors have no *savoir-vivre*.

ENGSTRAND. What haven't they got?

REGINA. I know what sailors are, I tell you. They aren't the sort of people to marry.

ENGSTRAND. Well, don't bother about marrying them. You can make it pay just as well. [*more confidentially.*] That fellow—the Englishman—the one with the yacht—he gave seventy pounds, he did; and she wasn't a bit prettier than you.

REGINA [*advancing towards him*]. Get out!

ENGSTRAND [*stepping back*]. Here! here!—you're not going to hit me, I suppose?

REGINA. Yes! If you talk like that of mother, I will hit you. Get out, I tell you! [*Pushes him up to the garden door.*] And don't bang the doors. Young Mr. Alving—

ENGSTRAND. Is asleep—I know. It's funny how anxious you are about young Mr. Alving. [*In a lower tone.*] Oho! is it possible that it is *he* that—?

REGINA. Get out, and be quick about it! Your wits are wandering, my good man. No, don't go that way; Mr. Manders is just coming along. Be off down the kitchen stairs.

ENGSTRAND [*moving towards the right*]. Yes, yes—all right. But have a bit of a chat with him that's coming

along. He's the chap to tell you what a child owes to its father. For I am your father, anyway, you know. I can prove it by the Register. [*He goes out through the farther door which* REGINA *has opened. She shuts it after him, looks hastily at herself in the mirror, fans herself with her handkerchief and sets her collar straight; then busies herself with the flowers.* MANDERS *enters the conservatory through the garden door. He wears an overcoat, carries an umbrella, and has a small travelling-bag slung over his shoulder on a strap.*]

MANDERS. Good morning, Miss Engstrand.

REGINA [*turning round with a look of pleased surprise*]. Oh, Mr. Manders, good morning. The boat is in, then?

MANDERS. Just in. [*Comes into the room.*] It is most tiresome, this rain every day.

REGINA [*following him in*]. It's a splendid rain for the farmers, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. Yes, you are quite right. We town-folk think so little about that. [*Begins to take off his overcoat.*]

REGINA. Oh, let me help you. That's it. Why, how wet it is! I will hang it up in the hall. Give me your umbrella, too; I will leave it open, so that it will dry.

[*She goes out with the things by the farther door on the right.* MANDERS *lays his bag and his hat down on a chair.* REGINA *re-enters.*]

MANDERS. Ah, it's very pleasant to get indoors. Well, is everything going on well here?

REGINA. Yes, thanks.

MANDERS. Properly busy, though, I expect, getting ready for to-morrow?

REGINA. Oh, yes, there is plenty to do.

MANDERS. And Mrs. Alving is at home, I hope?

REGINA. Yes, she is. She has just gone upstairs to take the young master his chocolate.

MANDERS. Tell me—I heard down at the pier that Oswald had come back.

REGINA. Yes, he came the day before yesterday. We didn't expect him till to-day.

MANDERS. Strong and well, I hope?

REGINA. Yes, thank you, well enough. But dreadfully tired after his journey. He came straight from Paris without a stop—I mean, he came all the way without breaking his journey. I fancy he is having a sleep now, so we must talk a little bit more quietly, if you don't mind.

MANDERS. All right, we will be very quiet.

REGINA [*while she moves an armchair up to the table*]. Please sit down, Mr. Manders, and make yourself at home. [*He sits down; she puts a footstool under his feet.*] There! Is that comfortable?

MANDERS. Thank you, thank you. That is most comfortable. [*Looks at her.*] I'll tell you what, Miss Engstrand, I certainly think you have grown since I saw you last.

REGINA. Do you think so? Mrs. Alving says, too, that I have developed.

MANDERS. Developed? Well, perhaps a little—just suitably. [*A short pause.*]

REGINA. Shall I tell Mrs. Alving you are here?

MANDERS. Thanks, there is no hurry, my dear child.—Now tell me, Regina my dear, how has your father been getting on here?

REGINA. Thank you, Mr. Manders, he is getting on pretty well.

MANDERS. He came to see me, the last time he was in town.

REGINA. Did he? He is always so glad when he can have a chat with you.

MANDERS. And I suppose you have seen him pretty regularly every day?

REGINA. I? Oh, yes, I do—whenever I have time, that is to say.

MANDERS. Your father has not a very strong character, Miss Engstrand. He sadly needs a guiding hand.

REGINA. Yes, I can quite believe that.

MANDERS. He needs someone with him that he can cling to, someone whose judgment he can rely on. He acknowl-

edged that freely himself, the last time he came to see me.

REGINA. Yes, he has said something of the same sort to me. But I don't know whether Mrs. Alving could do without me—most of all just now, when we have the new Orphanage to see about. And I should be dreadfully unwilling to leave Mrs. Alving, too; she has always been so good to me.

MANDERS. But a daughter's duty, my good child—. Naturally we should have to get your mistress' consent first.

REGINA. Still I don't know whether it would be quite the thing, at my age, to keep house for a single man.

MANDERS. What! My dear Miss Engstrand, it is your own father we are speaking of!

REGINA. Yes, I dare say, but still—. Now, if it were in a good house and with a real gentleman—

MANDERS. But, my dear Regina—

REGINA. —one whom I could feel an affection for, and really feel in the position of a daughter to—

MANDERS. Come, come—my dear good child—

REGINA. I should like very much to live in town. Out here it is terribly lonely; and you know yourself, Mr. Manders, what it is to be alone in the world. And, though I say it, I really am both capable and willing. Don't you know any place that would be suitable for me, Mr. Manders?

MANDERS. I? No, indeed I don't.

REGINA. But, dear Mr. Manders—at any rate don't forget me, in case—

MANDERS [*getting up*]. No, I won't forget you, Miss Engstrand.

REGINA. Because, if I—

MANDERS. Perhaps you will be so kind to let Mrs. Alving know I am here?

REGINA. I will fetch her at once, Mr. Manders. [*Goes out to the left.* MANDERS *walks up and down the room once or twice, stands for a moment at the farther end of the room with his hands behind his back and looks out into the garden. Then he comes back to the table, takes up a book and looks*

at the title page, gives a start, and looks at some of the others.]

MANDERS. Hm!—Really!

[MRS. ALVING *comes in by the door on the left. She is followed by* REGINA, *who goes out again at once through the nearer door on the right.*]

MRS. ALVING [*holding out her hand*]. I am very glad to see you, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. How do you do, Mrs. Alving. Here I am, as I promised.

MRS. ALVING. Always punctual!

MANDERS. Indeed, I was hard put to it to get away. What with vestry meetings and committees—

MRS. ALVING. It was all the kinder of you to come in such good time; we can settle our business before dinner. But where is your luggage?

MANDERS [*quickly*]. My things are down at the village shop. I am going to sleep there to-night.

MRS. ALVING [*repressing a smile*]. Can't I really persuade you to stay the night here this time?

MANDERS. No, no; many thanks all the same; I will put up there, as usual. It is so handy for getting on board the boat again.

MRS. ALVING. Of course you shall do as you please. But it seems to me quite another thing, now we are two old people—

MANDERS. Ha! ha! You will have your joke! And it's natural you should be in high spirits to-day—first of all there is the great event to-morrow, and also you have got Oswald home.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, am I not a lucky woman! It is more than two years since he was home last, and he has promised to stay the whole winter with me.

MANDERS. Has he, really? That is very nice and filial of him; because there must be many more attractions in his life in Rome or in Paris, I should think.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but he has his mother here, you see. Bless the dear boy, he has got a corner in his heart for his mother still.

MANDERS. Oh, it would be very sad if absence and preoccupation with such a thing as Art were to dull the natural affections.

MRS. ALVING. It would, indeed. But there is no fear of that with him, I am glad to say. I am quite curious to see if you recognise him again. He will be down directly; he is just lying down for a little on the sofa upstairs. But do sit down, my dear friend.

MANDERS. Thank you. You are sure I am not disturbing you?

MRS. ALVING. Of course not. [*She sits down at the table.*]

MANDERS. Good. Then I will show you—. [*He goes to the chair where his bag is lying and takes a packet of papers from it; then sits down at the opposite side of the table and looks for a clear space to put the papers down.*] Now first of all, here is—[*breaks off*]. Tell me, Mrs. Alving, what are these books doing here?

MRS. ALVING. These books? I am reading them.

MANDERS. Do you read this sort of thing?

MRS. ALVING. Certainly I do.

MANDERS. Do you feel any the better or the happier for reading books of this kind?

MRS. ALVING. I think it makes me, as it were, more self-reliant.

MANDERS. That is remarkable. But why?

MRS. ALVING. Well, they give me an explanation or a confirmation of lots of different ideas that have come into my own mind. But what surprises me, Mr. Manders, is that, properly speaking, there is nothing at all new in these books. There is nothing more in them than what most people think and believe. The only thing is, that most people either take no account of it or won't admit it to themselves.

MANDERS. But, good heavens, do you seriously think that most people—?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, indeed, I do.

MANDERS. But not here in the country at any rate? Not here amongst people like ourselves?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, amongst people like ourselves too.

MANDERS. Well, really, I must say—!

MRS. ALVING. But what is the particular objection that you have to these books?

MANDERS. What objections? You surely don't suppose that I take any particular interest in such productions?

MRS. ALVING. In fact, you don't know anything about what you are denouncing?

MANDERS. I have read quite enough about these books to disapprove of them.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but your own opinion—

MANDERS. My dear Mrs. Alving, there are many occasions in life when one has to rely on the opinion of others. That is the way in this world, and it is quite right that it should be so. What would become of society, otherwise?

MRS. ALVING. Well, you may be right.

MANDERS. Apart from that, naturally I don't deny that literature of this kind may have a considerable attraction. And I cannot blame you, either, for wishing to make yourself acquainted with the intellectual tendencies which I am told are at work in the wider world in which you have allowed your son to wander for so long. But—

MRS. ALVING. But—?

MANDERS [*lowering his voice*]. But one doesn't talk about it, Mrs. Alving. One certainly is not called upon to account to every one for what one reads or thinks in the privacy of one's own room.

MRS. ALVING. Certainly not. I quite agree with you.

MANDERS. Just think of the consideration you owe to this Orphanage, which you decided to build at a time when your thoughts on such subjects were very different from what they are now—as far as I am able to judge.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I freely admit that. But it was about the Orphanage—

MANDERS. It was about the Orphanage we were going to talk; quite so. Well—walk warily, dear Mrs. Alving! And now let us turn to the business in hand. [*Opens an envelope and takes out some papers.*] You see these?

MRS. ALVING. The deeds?

MANDERS. Yes, the whole lot—and everything in order. I can tell you it has been no easy matter to get them in time. I had positively to put pressure on the authorities; they are almost painfully conscientious when it is a question of settling property. But here they are at last. [*Turns over the papers.*] Here is the deed of conveyance of that part of the Rosenvold estate known as the Solvik property, together with the buildings newly erected thereon—the school, the masters' houses and the chapel. And here is the legal sanction for the statutes of the institution. Here, you see—[*reads*] "Statutes for the Captain Alving Orphanage."

MRS. ALVING [*after a long look at the papers*]. That seems all in order.

MANDERS. I thought "Captain" was the better title to use, rather than your husband's Court title of "Chamberlain." "Captain" seems less ostentatious.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes; just as you think best.

MANDERS. And here is the certificate for the investment of the capital in the bank, the interest being earmarked for the current expenses of the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING. Many thanks; but I think it will be most convenient if you will kindly take charge of them.

MANDERS. With pleasure. I think it will be best to leave the money in the bank for the present. The interest is not very high, it is true; four per cent at six months' call. Later on, if we can find some good mortgage—of course it must be a first mortgage and on unexceptionable security—we can consider the matter further.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes, my dear Mr. Manders, you know best about all that.

MANDERS. I will keep my eye on it, anyway. But there is one thing in connection with it that I have often meant to ask you about.

MRS. ALVING. What is that?

MANDERS. Shall we insure the buildings, or not?

MRS. ALVING. Of course we must insure them.

MANDERS. Ah, but wait a moment, dear lady. Let us look into the matter a little more closely.

MRS. ALVING. Everything of mine is insured—the house and its contents, my livestock—everything.

MANDERS. Naturally. They are your own property. I do exactly the same, of course. But this, you see, is quite a different case. The Orphanage is, so to speak, dedicated to higher uses.

MRS. ALVING. Certainly, but—

MANDERS. As far as I am personally concerned, I can conscientiously say that I don't see the smallest objection to our insuring ourselves against all risks.

MRS. ALVING. That is exactly what I think.

MANDERS. But what about the opinion of the people hereabouts?

MRS. ALVING. Their opinion—?

MANDERS. Is there any considerable body of opinion here—opinion of some account, I mean—that might take exception to it?

MRS. ALVING. What, exactly, do you mean by opinion of some account?

MANDERS. Well, I was thinking particularly of persons of such independent and influential position that one could hardly refuse to attach weight to their opinion.

MRS. ALVING. There are a certain number of such people here, who might perhaps take exception to it if we—

MANDERS. That's just it, you see. In town there are lots of them. All my fellow-clergymen's congregations, for instance! It would be so extremely easy for them to interpret it as meaning that neither you nor I had a proper reliance on Divine protection.

MRS. ALVING. But as far as you are concerned, my dear friend, you have at all events the consciousness that—

MANDERS. Yes, I know, I know; my own mind is quite

easy about it, it is true. But we should not be able to prevent a wrong and injurious interpretation of our action. And that sort of thing, moreover, might very easily end in exercising a hampering influence on the work of the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, well, if that is likely to be the effect of it—

MANDERS. Nor can I entirely overlook the difficult—indeed, I may say, painful—position I might possibly be placed in. In the best circles in town the matter of this Orphanage is attracting a great deal of attention. Indeed the Orphanage is to some extent built for the benefit of the town too, and it is to be hoped that it may result in the lowering of our poor-rate by a considerable amount. But as I have been your adviser in the matter and have taken charge of the business side of it, I should be afraid that it would be I that spiteful persons would attack first of all—

MRS. ALVING. Yes, you ought not to expose yourself to that.

MANDERS. Not to mention the attacks that would undoubtedly be made upon me in certain newspapers and reviews—

MRS. ALVING. Say no more about it, dear Mr. Manders; that quite decides it.

MANDERS. Then you don't wish it to be insured?

MRS. ALVING. No, we will give up the idea.

MANDERS [*leaning back in his chair*]. But suppose, now, that some accident happened?—one can never tell—would you be prepared to make good the damage?

MRS. ALVING. No; I tell you quite plainly I would not do so under any circumstances.

MANDERS. Still, you know, Mrs. Alving—after all, it is a serious responsibility that we are taking upon ourselves.

MRS. ALVING. But do you think we can do otherwise?

MANDERS. No, that's just it. We really can't do otherwise. We ought not to expose ourselves to a mistaken judgment; and we have no right to do anything that will scandalise the community.

MRS. ALVING. You ought not to, as a clergyman, at any rate.

MANDERS. And, what is more, I certainly think that we may count upon our enterprise being attended by good fortune—indeed, that it will be under a special protection.

MRS. ALVING. Let us hope so, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. Then we will leave it alone?

MRS. ALVING. Certainly.

MANDERS. Very good. As you wish. [*Makes a note.*] No insurance, then.

MRS. ALVING. It's a funny thing that you should just have happened to speak about that to-day—

MANDERS. I have often meant to ask you about it--

MRS. ALVING. —because yesterday we very nearly had a fire up there.

MANDERS. Do you mean it!

MRS. ALVING. Oh, as a matter of fact it was nothing of any consequence. Some shavings in the carpenter's shop caught fire.

MANDERS. Where Engstrand works?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. They say he is often so careless with matches.

MANDERS. He has so many things on his mind, poor fellow—so many anxieties. Heaven be thanked, I am told he is really making an effort to live a blameless life.

MRS. ALVING. Really? Who told you so?

MANDERS. He assured me himself that it is so. He's a good workman, too.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, yes, when he is sober.

MANDERS. Ah, that sad weakness of his! But the pain in his poor leg often drives him to it, he tells me. The last time he was in town, I was really quite touched by him. He came to my house and thanked me so gratefully for getting him work here, where he could have the chance of being with Regina.

MRS. ALVING. He doesn't see very much of her.

MANDERS. But he assured me that he saw her every day.

MRS. ALVING. Oh well, perhaps he does.

MANDERS. He feels so strongly that he needs some one who can keep a hold on him when temptations assail him. That is the most winning thing about Jacob Engstrand; he comes to one like a helpless child and accuses himself and confesses his frailty. The last time he came and had a talk with me—. Suppose now, Mrs. Alving, that it were really a necessity of his existence to have Regina at home with him again—

MRS. ALVING [*standing up suddenly*]. Regina!

MANDERS. —you ought not to set yourself against him.

MRS. ALVING. Indeed, I set myself very definitely against that. And, besides, you know Regina is to have a post in the Orphanage.

MANDERS. But consider, after all he is her father—

MRS. ALVING. I know best what sort of a father he has been to her. No, she shall never go to him with my consent.

MANDERS [*getting up*]. My dear lady, don't judge so hastily. It is very sad how you misjudge poor Engstrand. One would really think you were afraid—

MRS. ALVING [*more calmly*]. That is not the question. I have taken Regina into my charge, and in my charge she remains. [*Listens.*] Hush, dear Mr. Manders, don't say any more about it. [*Her face brightens with pleasure.*] Listen! Oswald is coming downstairs. We will only think about him now.

[OSWALD ALVING, *in a light overcoat, hat in hand and smoking a big meerschaum pipe, comes in by the door on the left.*]

OSWALD [*standing in the doorway*]. Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought you were in the office. [*Comes in.*] Good morning, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS [*staring at him*]. Well! It's most extraordinary—

MRS. ALVING. Yes, what do you think of him, Mr. Manders?

MANDERS. I—I—no, can it possibly be—?

OSWALD. Yes, it really is the prodigal son, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. Oh, my dear young friend—

OSWALD. Well, the son come home, then.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald is thinking of the time when you were so opposed to the idea of his being a painter.

MANDERS. We are only fallible, and many steps seem to us hazardous at first, that afterwards—[*grasps his hand*]. Welcome, welcome! Really, my dear Oswald—may I still call you Oswald?

OSWALD. What else would you think of calling me?

MANDERS. Thank you. What I mean, my dear Oswald, is that you must not imagine that I have any unqualified disapproval of the artist's life. I admit that there are many who, even in that career, can keep the inner man free from harm.

OSWALD. Let us hope so.

MRS. ALVING [*beaming with pleasure*]. I know one who has kept both the inner and the outer man free from harm. Just take a look at him, Mr. Manders.

OSWALD [*walks across the room*]. Yes, yes, mother dear, of course.

MANDERS. Undoubtedly—no one can deny it. And I hear you have begun to make a name for yourself. I have often seen mention of you in the papers—and extremely favourable mention, too. Although, I must admit, latterly I have not seen your name so often.

OSWALD [*going towards the conservatory*]. I haven't done so much painting just lately.

MRS. ALVING. An artist must take a rest sometimes, like other people.

MANDERS. Of course, of course. At those times the artist is preparing and strengthening himself for a greater effort.

OSWALD. Yes. Mother, will dinner soon be ready?

MRS. ALVING. In half an hour. He has a fine appetite, thank goodness.

MANDERS. And a liking for tobacco too.

OSWALD. I found father's pipe in the room upstairs, and—

MANDERS. Ah, that is what it was!

MRS. ALVING. What?

MANDERS. When Oswald came in at that door with the pipe in his mouth, I thought for the moment it was his father in the flesh.

OSWALD. Really?

MRS. ALVING. How can you say so! Oswald takes after me.

MANDERS. Yes, but there is an expression about the corners of his mouth—something about the lips—that reminds me so exactly of Mr. Alving—especially when he smokes.

MRS. ALVING. I don't think so at all. To my mind, Oswald has much more of a clergyman's mouth.

MANDERS. Well, yes—a good many of my colleagues in the church have a similar expression.

MRS. ALVING. But put your pipe down, my dear boy. I don't allow any smoking in here.

OSWALD [*puts down his pipe*]. All right, I only wanted to try it, because I smoked it once when I was a child.

MRS. ALVING. You?

OSWALD. Yes; it was when I was quite a little chap. And I can remember going upstairs to father's room one evening when he was in very good spirits.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, you can't remember anything about those days.

OSWALD. Yes, I remember plainly that he took me on his knee and let me smoke his pipe. "Smoke, my boy," he said, "have a good smoke, boy!" And I smoked as hard as I could, until I felt I was turning quite pale and the perspiration was standing in great drops on my forehead. Then he laughed—such a hearty laugh—

MANDERS. It was an extremely odd thing to do.

MRS. ALVING. Dear Mr. Manders, Oswald only dreamt it.

OSWALD. No indeed, mother, it was no dream. Because—don't you remember—you came into the room and carried me off to the nursery, where I was sick, and I saw that you were crying. Did father often play such tricks?

MANDERS. In his young days he was full of fun—

OSWALD. And, for all that, he did so much with his life—so much that was good and useful, I mean—short as his life was.

MANDERS. Yes, my dear Oswald Alving, you have inherited the name of a man who undoubtedly was both energetic and worthy. Let us hope it will be a spur to your energies—

OSWALD. It ought to be, certainly.

MANDERS. In any case it was nice of you to come home for the day that is to honour his memory.

OSWALD. I could do no less for my father.

MRS. ALVING. And to let me keep him so long here—that's the nicest part of what he has done.

MANDERS. Yes, I hear you are going to spend the winter at home.

OSWALD. I am here for an indefinite time, Mr. Manders. —Oh, it's good to be at home again!

MRS. ALVING [*beaming*]. Yes, isn't it?

MANDERS [*looking sympathetically at him*]. You went out into the world very young, my dear Oswald.

OSWALD. I did. Sometimes I wonder if I wasn't too young.

MRS. ALVING. Not a bit of it. It is the best thing for an active boy, and especially for an only child. It's a pity when they are kept at home with their parents and get spoilt.

MANDERS. That is a very debatable question, Mrs. Alving. A child's own home is, and always must be, his proper place.

OSWALD. There I agree entirely with Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. Take the case of your own son. Oh yes, we can talk about it before him. What has the result been in his case? He is six or seven and twenty, and has never yet had the opportunity of learning what a well-regulated home means.

OSWALD. Excuse me, Mr. Manders, you are quite wrong there.

MANDERS. Indeed? I imagined that your life abroad had practically been spent entirely in artistic circles.

OSWALD. So it has.

MANDERS. And chiefly amongst the younger artists.

OSWALD. Certainly.

MANDERS. But I imagined that those gentry, as a rule, had not the means necessary for family life and the support of a home.

OSWALD. There are a considerable number of them who have not the means to marry, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. That is exactly my point.

OSWALD. But they can have a home of their own, all the same; a good many of them have. And they are very well-regulated and very comfortable homes, too.

[MRS. ALVING, *who has listened to him attentively, nods assent, but says nothing.*]

MANDERS. Oh, but I am not talking of bachelor establishments. By a home I mean family life—the life a man lives with his wife and children.

OSWALD. Exactly, or with his children and his children's mother.

MANDERS [*starts and clasps his hands*]. Good heavens!

OSWALD. What is the matter?

MANDERS. Lives with—with—his children's mother!

OSWALD. Well, would you rather he should repudiate his children's mother?

MANDERS. Then what you are speaking of are those unprincipled conditions known as irregular unions!

OSWALD. I have never noticed anything particularly unprincipled about these people's lives.

MANDERS. But do you mean to say that it is possible for a man of any sort of bringing up, and a young woman, to reconcile themselves to such a way of living—and to make no secret of it, either?

OSWALD. What else are they to do? A poor artist, and a poor girl—it costs a good deal to get married. What else are they to do?

MANDERS. What are they to do? Well, Mr. Alving, I will tell you what they ought to do. They ought to keep away

from each other from the very beginning—that is what they ought to do!

Oswald. That advice wouldn't have much effect upon hot-blooded young folk who are in love.

Mrs. Alving. No, indeed it wouldn't.

Manders [*persistently*]. And to think that the authorities tolerate such things! That they are allowed to go on openly! [*Turns to* Mrs. Alving.] Had I so little reason, then, to be sadly concerned about your son? In circles where open immorality is rampant—where, one may say, it is honoured—

Oswald. Let me tell you this, Mr. Manders. I have been a constant Sunday guest at one or two of these "irregular" households—

Manders. On Sunday, too!

Oswald. Yes, that is the day of leisure. But never have I heard one objectionable word there, still less have I ever seen anything that could be called immoral. No; but do you know when and where I *have* met with immorality in artists' circles?

Manders. No, thank heaven, I don't!

Oswald. Well, then, I shall have the pleasure of telling you. I have met with it when some one or other of your model husbands and fathers have come out there to have a bit of a look round on their own account, and have done the artists the honour of looking them up in their humble quarters. Then we had a chance of learning something, I can tell you. These gentlemen were able to instruct us about places and things that we had never so much as dreamt of.

Manders. What? Do you want me to believe that honourable men when they get away from home will—

Oswald. Have you never, when these same honourable men come home again, heard them deliver themselves on the subject of the prevalence of immorality abroad?

Manders. Yes, of course, but—

Mrs. Alving. I have heard them, too.

Oswald. Well, you can take their word for it, unhesitatingly. Some of them are experts in the matter. [*Putting*

his hands to his head.] To think that the glorious freedom of the beautiful life over there should be so besmirched!

MRS. ALVING. You mustn't get too heated, Oswald; you gain nothing by that.

OSWALD. No, you are quite right, mother. Besides, it isn't good for me. It's because I am so infernally tired, you know. I will go out and take a turn before dinner. I beg your pardon, Mr. Manders. It is impossible for you to realise the feeling; but it takes me that way. [*Goes out by the farther door on the right.*]

MRS. ALVING. My poor boy!

MANDERS. You may well say so. This is what it has brought him to! [MRS. ALVING *looks at him, but does not speak.*] He called himself the prodigal son. It's only too true, alas—only too true! [MRS. ALVING *looks steadily at him.*] And what do you say to all this?

MRS. ALVING. I say that Oswald was right in every single word he said.

MANDERS. Right? Right? To hold such principles as that?

MRS. ALVING. In my loneliness here I have come to just the same opinions as he, Mr. Manders. But I have never presumed to venture upon such topics in conversation. Now there is no need; my boy shall speak for me.

MANDERS. You deserve the deepest pity, Mrs. Alving. It is my duty to say an earnest word to you. It is no longer your business man and adviser, no longer your old friend and your dead husband's old friend, that stands before you now. It is your priest that stands before you, just as he did once at the most critical moment of your life.

MRS. ALVING. And what is it that my priest has to say to me?

MANDERS. First of all I must stir your memory. The moment is well chosen. To-morrow is the tenth anniversary of your husband's death; to-morrow the memorial to the departed will be unveiled; to-morrow I shall speak to the whole assembly that will be met together. But to-day I want to speak to you alone.

MRS. ALVING. Very well, Mr. Manders, speak!

MANDERS. Have you forgotten that after barely a year of married life you were standing at the very edge of a precipice? —that you forsook your house and home?—that you ran away from your husband—yes, Mrs. Alving, ran away, ran away—and refused to return to him in spite of his requests and entreaties?

MRS. ALVING. Have you forgotten how unspeakably unhappy I was during that first year?

MANDERS. To crave for happiness in this world is simply to be possessed by a spirit of revolt. What right have we to happiness? No! we must do our duty, Mrs. Alving. And your duty was to cleave to the man you had chosen and to whom you were bound by a sacred bond.

MRS. ALVING. You know quite well what sort of a life my husband was living at that time—what excesses he was guilty of.

MANDERS. I know only too well what rumour used to say of him; and I should be the last person to approve of his conduct as a young man, supposing that rumour spoke the truth. But it is not a wife's part to be her husband's judge. You should have considered it your bounden duty humbly to have borne the cross that a higher will had laid upon you. But, instead of that, you rebelliously cast off your cross, you deserted the man whose stumbling footsteps you should have supported, you did what was bound to imperil your good name and reputation, and came very near to imperilling the reputation of others into the bargain.

MRS. ALVING. Of others? Of one other, you mean.

MANDERS. It was the height of imprudence, your seeking refuge with me.

MRS. ALVING. With our priest? With our intimate friend?

MANDERS. All the more on that account. You should thank God that I possessed the necessary strength of mind—that I was able to turn you from your outrageous intention, and that it was vouchsafed to me to succeed in leading you back into the path of duty and back to your lawful husband.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, Mr. Manders, that certainly was your doing.

MANDERS. I was but the humble instrument of a higher power. And is it not true that my having been able to bring you again under the yoke of duty and obedience sowed the seeds of a rich blessing on all the rest of your life? Did things not turn out as I foretold to you? Did not your husband turn from straying in the wrong path, as a man should? Did he not, after all, live a life of love and good report with you all his days? Did he not become a benefactor to the neighbourhood? Did he not so raise you up to his level, so that by degrees you became his fellow-worker in all his undertakings —and a noble fellow-worker, too, I know, Mrs. Alving; that praise I will give you.—But now I come to the second serious false step in your life.

MRS. ALVING. What do you mean?

MANDERS. Just as once you forsook your duty as a wife, so, since then, you have forsaken your duty as a mother.

MRS. ALVING. Oh—!

MANDERS. You have been overmastered all your life by a disastrous spirit of wilfulness. All your impulses have led you towards what is undisciplined and lawless. You have never been willing to submit to any restraint. Anything in life that has seemed irksome to you, you have thrown aside recklessly and unscrupulously, as if it were a burden that you were free to rid yourself of if you would. It did not please you to be a wife any longer, and so you left your husband. Your duties as a mother were irksome to you, so you sent your child away among strangers.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, that is true; I did that.

MANDERS. And that is why you have become a stranger to him.

MRS. ALVING. No, no, I am not that!

MANDERS. You are; you must be. And what sort of a son is it that you have got back? Think over it seriously, Mrs. Alving. You erred grievously in your husband's case—you

acknowledge as much, by erecting this memorial to him. Now you are bound to acknowledge how much you have erred in your son's case; possibly there may still be time to reclaim him from the paths of wickedness. Turn over a new leaf, and set yourself to reform what there may still be that is capable of reformation in him. Because [*with uplifted forefinger*] in very truth, Mrs. Alving, you are a guilty mother!—That is what I have thought it my duty to say to you.

[*A short silence.*]

Mrs. Alving [*speaking slowly and with self-control*]. You have had your say, Mr. Manders, and to-morrow you will be making a public speech in memory of my husband. I shall not speak to-morrow. But now I wish to speak to you for a little, just as you have been speaking to me.

Manders. By all means; no doubt you wish to bring forward some excuses for your behaviour—

Mrs. Alving. No. I only want to tell you something.

Manders. Well?

Mrs. Alving. In all that you said just now about me and my husband, and about our life together after you had, as you put it, led me back into the path of duty—there was nothing that you knew at first hand. From that moment you never again set foot in our house—you, who had been our daily companion before that.

Manders. Remember that you and your husband moved out of town immediately afterwards.

Mrs. Alving. Yes, and you never once came out here to see us in my husband's lifetime. It was only the business in connection with the Orphanage that obliged you to come and see me.

Manders [*in a low and uncertain voice*]. Helen—if that is a reproach, I can only beg you to consider—

Mrs. Alving. —the respect you owed to your calling?—yes. All the more as I was a wife who had tried to run away from her husband. One can never be too careful to have nothing to do with such reckless women.

MANDERS. My dear—Mrs. Alving, you are exaggerating dreadfully—

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes,—very well. What I mean is this, that when you condemn my conduct as a wife you have nothing more to go upon than ordinary public opinion.

MANDERS. I admit it. What then?

MRS. ALVING. Well—now, Mr. Manders, now I am going to tell you the truth. I had sworn to myself that you should know it one day—you, and you only!

MANDERS. And what may the truth be?

MRS. ALVING. The truth is this, that my husband died just as great a profligate as he had been all his life.

MANDERS [*feeling for a chair*]. What are you saying?

MRS. ALVING. After nineteen years of married life, just as profligate—in his desires at all events—as he was before you married us.

MANDERS. And can you talk of his youthful indiscretions —his irregularities—his excesses, if you like—as a profligate life!

MRS. ALVING. That was what the doctor who attended him called it.

MANDERS. I don't understand what you mean.

MRS. ALVING. It is not necessary you should.

MANDERS. It makes my brain reel. To think that your marriage—all the years of wedded life you spent with your husband—were nothing but a hidden abyss of misery.

MRS. ALVING. That and nothing else. Now you know.

MANDERS. This—this bewilders me. I can't understand it! I can't grasp it! How in the world was it possible—? How could such a state of things remain concealed?

MRS. ALVING. That was just what I had to fight for incessantly, day after day. When Oswald was born, I thought I saw a slight improvement. But it didn't last long. And after that I had to fight doubly hard—fight a desperate fight so that no one should know what sort of a man my child's father was. You know quite well what an attractive manner he had; it seemed as if people could believe nothing but good

of him. He was one of those men whose mode of life seems to have no effect upon their reputations. But at last, Mr. Manders—you must hear this too—at last something happened more abominable than everything else.

MANDERS. More abominable than what you have told me!

MRS. ALVING. I had borne with it all, though I knew only too well what he indulged in in secret, when he was out of the house. But when it came to the point of the scandal coming within our four walls—

MANDERS. Can you mean it! Here?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, here, in our own home. It was in there [*pointing to the nearer door on the right*] in the dining-room that I got the first hint of it. I had something to do in there and the door was standing ajar. I heard our maid come up from the garden with water for the flowers in the conservatory.

MANDERS. Well—?

MRS. ALVING. Shortly afterwards I heard my husband come in too. I heard him say something to her in a low voice. And then I heard—[*with a short laugh*]—oh, it rings in my ears still, with its mixture of what was heart-breaking and what was so ridiculous—I heard my own servant whisper: "Let me go, Mr. Alving! Let me be!"

MANDERS. What unseemly levity on his part! But surely nothing more than levity, Mrs. Alving, believe me.

MRS. ALVING. I soon knew what to believe. My husband had his will of the girl—and that intimacy had consequences, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS [*as if turned to stone*]. And all that in this house! In this house!

MRS. ALVING. I have suffered a good deal in this house. To keep him at home in the evening—and at night—I have had to play the part of boon companion in his secret drinking-bouts in his room up there. I have had to sit there alone with him, have had to hobnob and drink with him, have had to listen to his ribald senseless talk, have had to fight with brute force to get him to bed—

MANDERS [*trembling*]. And you were able to endure all this!

MRS. ALVING. I had my little boy, and endured it for his sake. But when the crowning insult came—when my own servant—then I made up my mind that there should be an end of it. I took the upper hand in the house, absolutely—both with him and all the others. I had a weapon to use against him, you see; he didn't dare to speak. It was then that Oswald was sent away. He was about seven then, and was beginning to notice things and ask questions as children will. I could endure all that, my friend. It seemed to me that the child would be poisoned if he breathed the air of this polluted house. That was why I sent him away. And now you understand, too, why he never set foot here as long as his father was alive. No one knows what it meant to me.

MANDERS. You have indeed had a pitiable experience.

MRS. ALVING. I could never have gone through with it, if I had not had my work. Indeed, I can boast that I have worked. All the increase in the value of the property, all the improvements, all the useful arrangements that my husband got the honour and glory of—do you suppose that he troubled himself about any of them? He, who used to lie the whole day on the sofa reading old Official Lists! No, you may as well know that too. It was I that kept him up to the mark when he had his lucid intervals; it was I that had to bear the whole burden of it when he began his excesses again or took to whining about his miserable condition.

MANDERS. And this is the man you are building a memorial to!

MRS. ALVING. There you see the power of an uneasy conscience.

MANDERS. An uneasy conscience? What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. I had always before me the fear that it was impossible that the truth should not come out and be believed. That is why the Orphanage is to exist, to silence all rumours and clear away all doubt.

MANDERS. You certainly have not fallen short of the mark in that, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. I had another very good reason. I did not wish Oswald, my own son, to inherit a penny that belonged to his father.

MANDERS. Then it is with Mr. Alving's property—

MRS. ALVING. Yes. The sums of money that, year after year, I have given towards this Orphanage, make up the amount of property—I have reckoned it carefully—which in the old days made Lieutenant Alving a catch.

MANDERS. I understand.

MRS. ALVING. That was my purchase money. I don't wish it to pass into Oswald's hands. My son shall have everything from me, I am determined.

[OSWALD *comes in by the farther door on the right. He has left his hat and coat outside.*]

MRS. ALVING. Back again, my own dear boy?

OSWALD. Yes, what can one do outside in this everlasting rain? I hear dinner is nearly ready. That's good!

[REGINA *comes in from the dining-room, carrying a parcel.*]

REGINA. This parcel has come for you, ma'am. [*Gives it to her.*]

MRS. ALVING [*glancing at* MANDERS]. The ode to be sung to-morrow, I expect.

MANDERS. Hm—!

REGINA. And dinner is ready.

MRS. ALVING. Good. We will come in a moment. I will just—[*begins to open the parcel*].

REGINA [*to* OSWALD]. Will you drink white or red wine, sir?

OSWALD. Both, Miss Engstrand.

REGINA. *Bien*—very good, Mr. Alving. [*Goes into the dining-room.*]

OSWALD. I may as well help you to uncork it—. [*Follows her into the dining-room, leaving the door ajar after him.*]

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I thought so. Here is the ode, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS [*clasping his hands*]. How shall I ever have the courage to-morrow to speak the address that—

MRS. ALVING. Oh, you will get through it.

MANDERS [*in a low voice, fearing to be heard in the dining-room*]. Yes, we must raise no suspicions.

MRS. ALVING [*quietly but firmly*]. No; and then this long dreadful comedy will be at an end. After to-morrow, I shall feel as if my dead husband had never lived in this house. There will be no one else here then but my boy and his mother.

[*From the dining-room is heard the noise of a chair falling; then* REGINA'S *voice is heard in a loud whisper:* Oswald! Are you mad? Let me go!]

MRS. ALVING [*starting in horror*]. Oh—!

[*She stares wildly at the half-open door.* OSWALD *is heard coughing and humming, then the sound of a bottle being uncorked.*]

MANDERS [*in an agitated manner*]. What's the matter? What is it, Mrs. Alving?

MRS. ALVING [*hoarsely*]. Ghosts. The couple in the conservatory—over again.

MANDERS. What are you saying! Regina—? Is she—?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. Come. Not a word—!

[*Grips* MANDERS *by the arm and walks unsteadily with him into the dining-room.*]

ACT II

[*The same scene. The landscape is still obscured by mist.* MANDERS *and* MRS. ALVING *come in from the dining-room.*]

MRS. ALVING [*calls into the dining-room from the doorway.*] Aren't you coming in here, Oswald?

OSWALD. No, thanks; I think I will go out for a bit.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, do; the weather is clearing a little. [*She shuts the dining-room door, then goes to the hall door and calls.*] Regina!

REGINA [*from without*]. Yes, ma'am?

MRS. ALVING. Go down into the laundry and help with the garlands.

REGINA. Yes, ma'am.

[MRS. ALVING *satisfies herself that she has gone, then shuts the door.*]

MANDERS. I suppose he can't hear us?

MRS. ALVING. Not when the door is shut. Besides, he is going out.

MANDERS. I am still quite bewildered. I don't know how I managed to swallow a mouthful of your excellent dinner.

MRS. ALVING [*walking up and down, and trying to control her agitation*]. Nor I. But what are we to do?

MANDERS. Yes, what are we to do? Upon my word I don't know; I am so completely unaccustomed to things of this kind.

MRS. ALVING. I am convinced that nothing serious has happened yet.

MANDERS. Heaven forbid! But it is most unseemly behaviour, for all that.

MRS. ALVING. It is nothing more than a foolish jest of Oswald's, you may be sure.

MANDERS. Well, of course, as I said, I am quite inexperienced in such matters; but it certainly seems to me—

MRS. ALVING. Out of the house she shall go—and at once. That part of it is as clear as daylight—

MANDERS. Yes, that is quite clear.

MRS. ALVING. But where is she to go? We should not be justified in—

MANDERS. Where to? Home to her father, of course.

MRS. ALVING. To whom, did you say?

MANDERS. To her—. No, of course Engstrand isn't—. But, great heavens, Mrs. Alving, how is such a thing possible?

You surely may have been mistaken, in spite of everything.

MRS. ALVING. There was no chance of mistake, more's the pity. Joanna was obliged to confess it to me—and my husband couldn't deny it. So there was nothing else to do but to hush it up.

MANDERS. No, that was the only thing to do.

MRS. ALVING. The girl was sent away at once, and was given a tolerably liberal sum to hold her tongue. She looked after the rest herself when she got to town. She renewed an old acquaintance with the carpenter Engstrand; gave him a hint, I suppose, of how much money she had got, and told him some fairy tale about a foreigner who had been here in his yacht in the summer. So she and Engstrand were married in a great hurry. Why, you married them yourself!

MANDERS. I can't understand it—. I remember clearly Engstrand's coming to arrange about the marriage. He was full of contrition, and accused himself bitterly for the light conduct he and his fiancée had been guilty of.

MRS. ALVING. Of course he had to take the blame on himself.

MANDERS. But the deceitfulness of it! And with me, too! I positively would not have believed it of Jacob Engstrand. I shall most certainly give him a serious talking to.—And the immorality of such a marriage! Simply for the sake of the money—! What sum was it that the girl had?

MRS. ALVING. It was seventy pounds.

MANDERS. Just think of it—for a paltry seventy pounds to let yourself be bound in marriage to a fallen woman!

MRS. ALVING. What about myself, then?—I let myself be bound in marriage to a fallen man.

MANDERS. Heaven forgive you! what are you saying? A fallen man?

MRS. ALVING. Do you suppose my husband was any purer, when I went with him to the altar, than Joanna was when Engstrand agreed to marry her?

MANDERS. The two cases are as different as day from night—

MRS. ALVING. Not so very different, after all. It is true there was a great difference in the price paid, between a paltry seventy pounds and a whole fortune.

MANDERS. How can you compare such totally different things! I presume you consulted your own heart—and your relations.

MRS. ALVING [*looking away from him*]. I thought you understood where what you call my heart had strayed to at that time.

MANDERS [*In a constrained voice*]. If I had understood anything of the kind, I would not have been a daily guest in your husband's house.

MRS. ALVING. Well, at any rate this much is certain, that I didn't consult myself in the matter at all.

MANDERS. Still you consulted those nearest to you, as was only right—your mother, your two aunts.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, that is true. The three of them settled the whole matter for me. It seems incredible to me now, how clearly they made out that it would be sheer folly to reject such an offer. If my mother could only see what all that fine prospect has led to!

MANDERS. No one can be responsible for the result of it. Anyway, there is this to be said, that the match was made in complete conformity with law and order.

MRS. ALVING [*going to the window*]. Oh, law and order! I often think it is that that is at the bottom of all the misery in the world.

MANDERS. Mrs. Alving, it is very wicked of you to say that.

MRS. ALVING. That may be so; but I don't attach importance to those obligations and considerations any longer. I cannot! I must struggle for my freedom.

MANDERS. What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING [*tapping on the window panes*]. I ought never to have concealed what sort of a life my husband led. But I had not the courage to do otherwise then—for my own sake, either. I was too much of a coward.

MANDERS. A coward?

MRS. ALVING. If others had known anything of what happened, they would have said: "Poor man, it is natural enough that he should go astray, when he has a wife that has run away from him."

MANDERS. They would have had a certain amount of justification for saying so.

MRS. ALVING [*looking fixedly at him*]. If I had been the woman I ought, I would have taken Oswald into my confidence and said to him: "Listen, my son, your father was a dissolute man"—

MANDERS. Miserable woman—

MRS. ALVING. —and I would have told him all I have told you, from beginning to end.

MANDERS. I am almost shocked at you, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. I know. I know quite well! I am shocked at myself when I think of it. [*Comes away from the window.*] I am coward enough for that.

MANDERS. Can you call it cowardice that you simply did your duty! Have you forgotten that a child should love and honour his father and mother?

MRS. ALVING. Don't let us talk in such general terms. Suppose we say: "Ought Oswald to love and honour Mr. Alving?"

MANDERS. You are a mother—isn't there a voice in your heart that forbids you to shatter your son's ideals?

MRS. ALVING. And what about the truth?

MANDERS. What about his ideals?

MRS. ALVING. Oh—ideals, ideals! If only I were not such a coward as I am!

MANDERS. Do not spurn ideals, Mrs. Alving—they have a way of avenging themselves cruelly. Take Oswald's own case, now. He hasn't many ideals, more's the pity. But this much I have seen, that his father is something of an ideal to him.

MRS. ALVING. You are right there.

MANDERS. And his conception of his father is what you inspired and encouraged by your letters.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I was swayed by duty and consider-

ation for others; that was why I lied to my son, year in and year out. Oh, what a coward—what a coward I have been!

MANDERS. You have built up a happy illusion in your son's mind, Mrs. Alving—and that is a thing you certainly ought not to undervalue.

MRS. ALVING. Ah, who knows if that is such a desirable thing after all!—But anyway I don't intend to put up with any goings on with Regina. I am not going to let him get the poor girl into trouble.

MANDERS. Good heavens, no—that would be a frightful thing!

MRS. ALVING. If only I knew whether he meant it seriously, and whether it would mean happiness for him—

MANDERS. In what way? I don't understand.

MRS. ALVING. But that is impossible; Regina is not equal to it, unfortunately.

MANDERS. I don't understand. What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. If I were not such a miserable coward, I would say to him: "Marry her, or make any arrangement you like with her—only let there be no deceit in the matter."

MANDERS. Heaven forgive you! Are you actually suggesting anything so abominable, so unheard of, as a marriage between them!

MRS. ALVING. Unheard of, do you call it? Tell me honestly, Mr. Manders, don't you suppose there are plenty of married couples out here in the country that are just as nearly related as they are?

MANDERS. I am sure I don't understand you.

MRS. ALVING. Indeed you do.

MANDERS. I suppose you are thinking of cases where possibly—. It is only too true, unfortunately, that family life is not always as stainless as it should be. But as for the sort of thing you hint at—well, it's impossible to tell, at all events with any certainty. Here, on the other hand—for you, a mother, to be willing to allow your—

MRS. ALVING. But I am not willing to allow it. I would not

allow it for anything in the world; that is just what I was saying.

MANDERS. No, because you are a coward, as you put it. But, supposing you were not a coward—! Great heavens—such a revolting union!

MRS. ALVING. Well, for the matter of that, we are all descended from a union of that description, so we are told. And who was it that was responsible for this state of things, Mr. Manders?

MANDERS. I can't discuss such questions with you, Mrs. Alving; you are by no means in the right frame of mind for that. But for you to dare to say that it is cowardly of you—!

MRS. ALVING. I will tell you what I mean by that. I am frightened and timid, because I am obsessed by the presence of ghosts that I never can get rid of.

MANDERS. The presence of what?

MRS. ALVING. Ghosts. When I heard Regina and Oswald in there, it was just like seeing ghosts before my eyes. I am half inclined to think we are all ghosts, Mr. Manders. It is not only what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers that exists again in us, but all sorts of old dead ideas and all kinds of old dead beliefs and things of that kind. They are not actually alive in us; but there they are dormant, all the same, and we can never be rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper and read it, I fancy I see ghosts creeping between the lines. There must be ghosts all over the world. They must be as countless as the grains of the sands, it seems to me. And we are so miserably afraid of the light, all of us.

MANDERS. Ah!—there we have the outcome of your reading. Fine fruit it has borne—this abominable, subversive, free-thinking literature!

MRS. ALVING. You are wrong there, my friend. You are the one who made me begin to think; and I owe you my best thanks for it.

MANDERS. I!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, by forcing me to submit to what you called my duty and my obligations; by praising as right and

just what my whole soul revolted against, as it would against something abominable. That was what led me to examine your teachings critically. I only wanted to unravel one point in them; but as soon as I had got that unravelled, the whole fabric came to pieces. And then I realised that it was only machine-made.

MANDERS [*softly, and with emotion*]. Is that all I accomplished by the hardest struggle of my life?

MRS. ALVING. Call it rather the most ignominious defeat of your life.

MANDERS. It was the greatest victory of my life, Helen; victory over myself.

MRS. ALVING. It was a wrong done to both of us.

MANDERS. A wrong?—wrong for me to entreat you as a wife to go back to your lawful husband, when you came to me half distracted and crying: "Here I am, take me!" Was that a wrong?

MRS. ALVING. I think it was.

MANDERS. We two do not understand one another.

MRS. ALVING. Not now, at all events.

MANDERS. Never—even in my most secret thoughts—have I for a moment regarded you as anything but the wife of another.

MRS. ALVING. Do you believe what you say?

MANDERS. Helen—!

MRS. ALVING. One so easily forgets one's own feelings.

MANDERS. Not I. I am the same as I always was.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes—don't let us talk any more about the old days. You are buried up to your eyes now in committees and all sorts of business; and I am here, fighting with ghosts both without and within me.

MANDERS. I can at all events help you to get the better of those without you. After all that I have been horrified to hear from you to-day, I cannot conscientiously allow a young defenceless girl to remain in your house.

MRS. ALVING. Don't you think it would be best if we could get her settled?—by some suitable marriage, I mean.

MANDERS. Undoubtedly. I think, in any case, it would have been desirable for her. Regina is at an age now that—well, I don't know much about these things, but—

MRS. ALVING. Regina developed very early.

MANDERS. Yes, didn't she. I fancy I remember thinking she was remarkably well developed, bodily, at the time I prepared her for Confirmation. But, for the time being, she must in any case go home. Under her father's care—no, but of course Engstrand is not—. To think that he, of all men, could so conceal the truth from me!

[*A knock is heard at the hall door.*]

MRS. ALVING. Who can that be? Come in!

[ENGSTRAND, *dressed in his Sunday clothes, appears in the doorway.*]

ENGSTRAND. I humbly beg pardon, but—

MANDERS. Aha! Hm!—

MRS. ALVING. Oh, it's you, Engstrand!

ENGSTRAND. There were none of the maids about, so I took the great liberty of knocking.

MRS. ALVING. That's all right. Come in. Do you want to speak to me?

ENGSTRAND [*coming in*]. No, thank you very much, ma'am. It was Mr. Manders I wanted to speak to for a moment.

MANDERS [*walking up and down*]. Hm!—do you. You want to speak to me, do you?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, sir, I wanted so very much to—

MANDERS [*stopping in front of him*]. Well, may I ask what it is you want?

ENGSTRAND. It's this way, Mr. Manders. We are being paid off now. And many thanks to you, Mrs. Alving. And now the work is quite finished, I thought it would be so nice and suitable if all of us, who have worked so honestly together all this time, were to finish up with a few prayers this evening.

MANDERS. Prayers? Up at the Orphanage?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, sir, but if it isn't agreeable to you, then—

MANDERS. Oh, certainly—but—hm!—

ENGSTRAND. I have made a practice of saying a few prayers there myself each evening—

MRS. ALVING. Have you?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, ma'am, now and then—just as a little edification, so to speak. But I am only a poor common man, and haven't rightly the gift, alas—and so I thought that as Mr. Manders happened to be here, perhaps—

MANDERS. Look here, Engstrand. First of all I must ask you a question. Are you in a proper frame of mind for such a thing? Is your conscience free and untroubled?

ENGSTRAND. Heaven have mercy on me a sinner! My conscience isn't worth our speaking about, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. But it is just what we must speak about. What do you say to my question?

ENGSTRAND. My conscience? Well—it's uneasy sometimes, of course.

MANDERS. Ah, you admit that at all events. Now will you tell me, without any concealment—what is your relationship to Regina?

MRS. ALVING [*hastily*]. Mr. Manders!

MANDERS [*calming her*]. —Leave it to me!

ENGSTRAND. With Regina? Good Lord, how you frightened me! [*Looks at* MRS. ALVING.] There is nothing wrong with Regina, is there?

MANDERS. Let us hope not. What I want to know is, what is your relationship to her? You pass as her father, don't you?

ENGSTRAND [*unsteadily*]. Well—hm!—you know, sir, what happened between me and my poor Joanna.

MANDERS. No more distortion of the truth! Your late wife made a full confession to Mrs. Alving, before she left her service.

ENGSTRAND. What!—do you mean to say—? Did she do that after all?

MANDERS. You see it has all come out, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. Do you mean to say that she, who gave me her promise and solemn oath—

MANDERS. Did she take an oath?

ENGSTRAND. Well, no—she only gave me her word, but as seriously as a woman could.

MANDERS. And all these years you have been hiding the truth from me—from me, who have had such complete and absolute faith in you.

ENGSTRAND. I am sorry to say I have, sir.

MANDERS. Did I deserve that from you, Engstrand? Haven't I been always ready to help you in word and deed as far as lay in my power? Answer me! Is it not so?

ENGSTRAND. Indeed there's many a time I should have been very badly off without you, sir.

MANDERS. And this is the way you repay me—by causing me to make false entries in the church registers, and afterwards keeping back from me for years the information which you owed it both to me and to your sense of the truth to divulge. Your conduct has been absolutely inexcusable, Engstrand, and from to-day everything is at an end between us.

ENGSTRAND [*with a sigh*]. Yes, I can see that's what it means.

MANDERS. Yes, because how can you possibly justify what you did?

ENGSTRAND. Was the poor girl to go and increase her load of shame by talking about it? Just suppose, sir, for a moment that your reverence was in the same predicament as my poor Joanna—

MANDERS. I!

ENGSTRAND. Good Lord, sir, I don't mean the same predicament. I mean, suppose there were something your reverence were ashamed of in the eyes of the world, so to speak. We men oughtn't to judge a poor woman too hardly, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. But I am not doing so at all. It is you I am blaming.

ENGSTRAND. Will your reverence grant me leave to ask you a small question?

MANDERS. Ask away.

ENGSTRAND. Shouldn't you say it was right for a man to raise up the fallen?

MANDERS. Of course it is.

ENGSTRAND. And isn't a man bound to keep his word of honour?

MANDERS. Certainly he is; but—

ENGSTRAND. At the time when Joanna had her misfortune with this Englishman—or maybe he was an American or a Russian, as they call 'em—well, sir, then she came to town. Poor thing, she had refused me once or twice before; she only had eyes for good-looking men in those days, and I had this crooked leg then. Your reverence will remember how I had ventured up into a dancing-saloon where seafaring men were revelling in drunkenness and intoxication, as they say. And when I tried to exhort them to turn from their evil ways—

MRS. ALVING [*coughs from the window*]. Ahem!

MANDERS. I know, Engstrand, I know—the rough brutes threw you downstairs. You have told me about that incident before. The affliction to your leg is a credit to you.

ENGSTRAND. I don't want to claim credit for it, your reverence. But what I wanted to tell you was that she came then and confided in me with tears and gnashing of teeth. I can tell you, sir, it went to my heart to hear her.

MANDERS. Did it, indeed, Engstrand? Well, what then?

ENGSTRAND. Well, then I said to her: "The American is roaming about on the high seas, he is. And you, Joanna," I said, "you have committed a sin and are a fallen woman. But here stands Jacob Engstrand," I said, "on two strong legs"—of course that was only speaking in a kind of metaphor, as it were, your reverence.

MANDERS. I quite understand. Go on.

ENGSTRAND. Well, sir, that was how I rescued her and made her my lawful wife, so that no one should know how recklessly she had carried on with the stranger.

MANDERS. That was all very kindly done. The only thing

I cannot justify was your bringing yourself to accept the money—

ENGSTRAND. Money? I? Not a farthing.

MANDERS [*to* MRS. ALVING, *in a questioning tone*]. But—

ENGSTRAND. Ah, yes!—wait a bit; I remember now. Joanna did have a trifle of money, you are quite right. But I didn't want to know anything about that. "Fie," I said, "on the mammon of unrighteousness, it's the price of your sin; as for this tainted gold"—or notes, or whatever it was—"we will throw it back in the American's face," I said. But he had gone away and disappeared on the stormy seas, your reverence.

MANDERS. Was that how it was, my good fellow?

ENGSTRAND. It was, sir. So then Joanna and I decided that the money should go towards the child's bringing-up, and that's what became of it; and I can give a faithful account of every single penny of it.

MANDERS. This alters the complexion of the affair very considerably.

ENGSTRAND. That's how it was, your reverence. And I make bold to say that I have been a good father to Regina—as far as was in my power—for I am a poor erring mortal, alas!

MANDERS. There, there, my dear Engstrand—

ENGSTRAND. Yes, I do make bold to say that I brought up the child, and made my poor Joanna a loving and careful husband, as the Bible says we ought. But it never occurred to me to go to your reverence and claim credit for it or boast about it because I had done one good deed in this world. No; when Jacob Engstrand does a thing like that, he holds his tongue about it. Unfortunately it doesn't often happen, I know that only too well. And whenever I do come to see your reverence, I never seem to have anything but trouble and wickedness to talk about. Because, as I said just now—and I say it again—conscience can be very hard on us sometimes.

MANDERS. Give me your hand, Jacob Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. Oh, sir, I don't like—

MANDERS. No nonsense. [*Grasps his hand.*] That's it!

ENGSTRAND. And may I make bold humbly to beg your reverence's pardon—

MANDERS. You? On the contrary it is for me to beg your pardon—

ENGSTRAND. Oh no, sir.

MANDERS. Yes, certainly it is, and I do it with my whole heart. Forgive me for having so much misjudged you. And I assure you that if I can do anything for you to prove my sincere regret and my goodwill towards you—

ENGSTRAND. Do you mean it, sir?

MANDERS. It would give me the greatest pleasure.

ENGSTRAND. As a matter of fact, sir, you could do it now. I am thinking of using the honest money I have put away out of my wages up here, in establishing a sort of Sailors' Home in the town.

MRS. ALVING. You?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, to be a sort of Refuge, as it were. There are such manifold temptations lying in wait for sailor men when they are roaming about on shore. But my idea is that in this house of mine they should have a sort of parental care looking after them.

MANDERS. What do you say to that, Mrs. Alving!

ENGSTRAND. I haven't much to begin such a work with, I know; but Heaven might prosper it, and if I found any helping hand stretched out to me, then—

MANDERS. Quite so; we will talk over the matter further. Your project attracts me enormously. But in the meantime go back to the Orphanage and put everything tidy and light the lights, so that the occasion may seem a little solemn. And then we will spend a little edifying time together, my dear Engstrand, for now I am sure you are in a suitable frame of mind.

ENGSTRAND. I believe I am, sir, truly. Good-bye, then, Mrs. Alving, and thank you for all your kindness; and take good care of Regina for me. [*Wipes a tear from his eye.*] Poor Joanna's child—it is an extraordinary thing, but she seems to have grown into my life and to hold me by the heart-

strings. That's how I feel about it, truly. [*Bows, and goes out.*]

MANDERS. Now then, what do you think of him, Mrs. Alving! That was quite another explanation that he gave us.

MRS. ALVING. It was, indeed.

MANDERS. There, you see how exceedingly careful we ought to be in condemning our fellow-men. But at the same time it gives one genuine pleasure to find that one was mistaken. Don't you think so?

MRS. ALVING. What I think is that you are, and always will remain, a big baby, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. I?

MRS. ALVING [*laying her hands on his shoulders*]. And I think that I should like very much to give you a good hug.

MANDERS [*drawing back hastily*]. No, no, good gracious! What an idea!

MRS. ALVING [*with a smile*]. Oh, you needn't be afraid of me.

MANDERS [*standing by the table*]. You choose such an extravagant way of expressing yourself sometimes. Now I must get these papers together and put them in my bag. [*Does so.*] That's it. And now good-bye, for the present. Keep your eyes open when Oswald comes back. I will come back and see you again presently.

[*He takes his hat and goes out by the hall door.* MRS. ALVING *sighs, glances out of the window, puts one or two things tidy in the room and turns to go into the dining-room. She stops in the doorway with a stifled cry.*]

MRS. ALVING. Oswald, are you still sitting at table!

OSWALD [*from the dining-room*]. I am only finishing my cigar.

MRS. ALVING. I thought you had gone out for a little turn.

OSWALD [*from within the room*]. In weather like this? [*A glass is heard clinking.* MRS. ALVING *leaves the door open and sits down with her knitting on the couch by the window.*] Wasn't that Mr. Manders that went out just now?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, he has gone over to the Orphanage.

OSWALD. Oh. [*The clink of a bottle on a glass is heard again.*]

MRS. ALVING [*with an uneasy expression*]. Oswald, dear, you should be careful with that liqueur. It is strong.

OSWALD. It's a good protective against the damp.

MRS. ALVING. Wouldn't you rather come in here?

OSWALD. You know you don't like smoking in there.

MRS. ALVING. You may smoke a cigar in here, certainly.

OSWALD. All right; I will come in, then. Just one drop more. There! [*Comes in, smoking a cigar, and shuts the door after him. A short silence.*] Where has the parson gone?

MRS. ALVING. I told you he had gone over to the Orphanage.

OSWALD. Oh, so you did.

MRS. ALVING. You shouldn't sit so long at table, Oswald.

OSWALD [*holding his cigar behind his back*]. But it's so nice and cosy, mother dear. [*Caresses her with one hand.*] Think what it means to me—to have come home; to sit at my mother's own table, in my mother's own room, and to enjoy the charming meals she gives me.

MRS. ALVING. My dear, dear boy!

OSWALD [*a little impatiently, as he walks up and down smoking*]. And what else is there for me to do here? I have no occupation—

MRS. ALVING. No occupation?

OSWALD. Not in this ghastly weather, when there isn't a blink of sunshine all day long. [*Walks up and down the floor.*] Not to be able to work, it's —!

MRS. ALVING. I don't believe you were wise to come home.

OSWALD. Yes, mother; I had to.

MRS. ALVING. Because I would ten times rather give up the happiness of having you with me, sooner than that you should—

OSWALD [*standing still by the table*]. Tell me, mother—is it really such a great happiness for you to have me at home?

MRS. ALVING. Can you ask?

OSWALD [*crumpling up a newspaper*]. I should have

thought it would have been pretty much the same to you whether I were here or away.

MRS. ALVING. Have you the heart to say that to your mother, Oswald?

OSWALD. But you have been quite happy living without me so far.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I have lived without you—that is true.

[*A silence. The dusk falls by degrees.* OSWALD *walks restlessly up and down. He has laid aside his cigar.*]

OSWALD [*stopping beside* MRS. ALVING]. Mother, may I sit on the couch beside you?

MRS. ALVING. Of course, my dear boy.

OSWALD [*sitting down*]. Now I must tell you something, mother.

MRS. ALVING [*anxiously*]. What?

OSWALD [*staring in front of him*]. I can't bear it any longer.

MRS. ALVING. Bear what? What do you mean?

OSWALD [*as before*]. I couldn't bring myself to write to you about it; and since I have been at home—

MRS. ALVING [*catching him by the arm*]. Oswald, what is it?

OSWALD. Both yesterday and to-day I have tried to push my thoughts away from me—to free myself from them. But I can't.

MRS. ALVING [*getting up*]. You must speak plainly, Oswald!

OSWALD [*drawing her down to her seat again*]. Sit still, and I will try and tell you. I have made a great deal of the fatigue I felt after my journey—

MRS. ALVING. Well, what of that?

OSWALD. But that isn't what is the matter. It is no ordinary fatigue—

MRS. ALVING [*trying to get up*]. You are not ill, Oswald!

OSWALD [*pulling her down again*]. Sit still, mother. Do take it quietly. I am not exactly ill—not ill in the usual sense.

[*Takes his head in his hands.*] Mother, it's my mind that has broken down—gone to pieces—I shall never be able to work any more! [*Buries his face in his hands and throws himself at her knees in an outburst of sobs.*]

MRS. ALVING [*pale and trembling*]. Oswald! Look at me! No, no, it isn't true!

OSWALD [*looking up with a distracted expression*]. Never to be able to work any more! Never—never! A living death! Mother, can you imagine anything so horrible!

MRS. ALVING. My poor unhappy boy? How has this terrible thing happened?

OSWALD [*sitting up again*]. That is just what I cannot possibly understand. I have never lived recklessly, in any sense. You must believe that of me, mother! I have never done that.

MRS. ALVING. I haven't a doubt of it, Oswald.

OSWALD. And yet this comes upon me all the same!—this terrible disaster!

MRS. ALVING. Oh, but it will all come right again, my dear precious boy. It is nothing but overwork. Believe me, that is so.

OSWALD [*dully*]. I thought so too, at first; but it isn't so.

MRS. ALVING. Tell me all about it.

OSWALD. Yes, I will

MRS. ALVING. When did you first feel anything?

OSWALD. It was just after I had been home last time and had got back to Paris. I began to feel the most violent pains in my head—mostly at the back, I think. It was as if a tight band of iron was passing on me from my neck upwards.

MRS. ALVING. And then?

OSWALD. At first I thought it was nothing but the headaches I always used to be so much troubled with while I was growing.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes—

OSWALD. But it wasn't; I soon saw that. I couldn't work any longer. I would try and start some big new picture; but it seemed as if all my faculties had forsaken me, as if all my

strength were paralysed. I couldn't manage to collect my thoughts; my head seemed to swim— everything went round and round. It was a horrible feeling! At last I sent for a doctor—and from him I learnt the truth.

MRS. ALVING. In what way, do you mean?

OSWALD. He was one of the best doctors there. He made me describe what I felt, and then he began to ask me a whole heap of questions which seemed to me to have nothing to do with the matter. I couldn't see what he was driving at—

MRS. ALVING. Well?

OSWALD. At last he said: "You have had the canker of disease in you practically from your birth"—the actual word he used was *"vermoulu."*

MRS. ALVING [*anxiously*]. What did he mean by that?

OSWALD. I couldn't understand, either—and I asked him for a clearer explanation. And then the old cynic said— [*clenching his fist*]. Oh!—

MRS. ALVING. What did he say?

OSWALD. He said: "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children."

MRS. ALVING [*getting up slowly*]. The sins of the fathers—!

OSWALD. I nearly struck him in the face—

MRS. ALVING [*walking across the room*]. The sins of the fathers—!

OSWALD [*smiling sadly*]. Yes, just imagine! Naturally I assured him that what he thought was impossible. But do you think he paid any heed to me? No, he persisted in his opinion; and it was only when I got out your letters and translated to him all the passages that referred to my father—

MRS. ALVING. Well, and then?

OSWALD. Well, then of course he had to admit that he was on the wrong track; and then I learnt the truth—the incomprehensible truth! I ought to have had nothing to do with the joyous happy life I had lived with my comrades. It had been too much for my strength. So it was my own fault!

Mrs. Alving. No, no, Oswald! Don't believe that!

Oswald. There was no other explanation of it possible, he said. That is the most horrible part of it. My whole life incurably ruined—just because of my own imprudence. All that I wanted to do in the world—not to dare to think of it any more—not to be *able* to think of it! Oh! if only I could live my life over again—if only I could undo what I have done! [*Throws himself on his face on the couch.* Mrs. Alving *wrings her hands, and walks up and down silently fighting with herself.*]

Oswald [*looks up after a while, raising himself on his elbows*]. If only it had been something I had inherited—something I could not help. But, instead of that, to have disgracefully, stupidly, thoughtlessly thrown away one's happiness, one's health, everything in the world—one's future, one's life—

Mrs. Alving. No, no, my darling boy; that is impossible! [*Bending over him.*] Things are not so desperate as you think.

Oswald. Ah, you don't know—. (*Springs up.*) And to think, mother, that I should bring all this sorrow upon you! Many a time I have almost wished and hoped that you really did not care so very much for me.

Mrs. Alving. I, Oswald? My only son! All that I have in the world! The only thing I care about!

Oswald [*taking hold of her hands and kissing them*]. Yes, yes, I know that is so. When I am at home I know that is true. And that is one of the hardest parts of it to me. But now you know all about it; and now we won't talk any more about it to-day. I can't stand thinking about it long at a time. [*Walks across the room.*] Let me have something to drink, mother!

Mrs. Alving. To drink? What do you want?

Oswald. Oh, anything you like. I suppose you have got some punch in the house.

Mrs. Alving. Yes, but my dear Oswald—!

Oswald. Don't tell me I mustn't, mother. Do be nice! I

must have something to drown these gnawing thoughts. [*Goes into the conservatory.*] And how—how gloomy it is here! [MRS. ALVING *rings the bell.*] And this incessant rain. It may go on week after week—a whole month. Never a ray of sunshine. I don't remember ever having seen the sun shine once when I have been at home.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald—you are thinking of going away from me!

OSWALD. Hm!—[*sighs deeply*]. I am not thinking about anything. I *can't* think about anything! [*In a low voice.*] I have to let that alone.

REGINA [*coming from the dining-room*]. Did you ring, ma'am?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, let us have the lamp in.

REGINA. In a moment, ma'am; it is all ready lit. [*Goes out.*]

MRS. ALVING [*going up to* OSWALD.] Oswald, don't keep anything back from me.

OSWALD. I don't, mother. [*Goes to the table.*] It seems to me I have told you a good lot.

[REGINA *brings the lamp and puts it upon the table.*]

MRS. ALVING. Regina, you might bring us a small bottle of champagne.

REGINA. Yes, ma'am. [*Goes out.*]

OSWALD [*taking hold of his mother's face*]. That's right. I knew my mother wouldn't let her son go thirsty.

MRS. ALVING. My poor dear boy, how could I refuse you anything now?

OSWALD [*eagerly*]. Is that true, mother? Do you mean it?

MRS. ALVING. Mean what?

OSWALD. That you couldn't deny me anything?

MRS. ALVING. My dear Oswald—

OSWALD. Hush!

[REGINA *brings in a tray with a small bottle of champagne and two glasses, which she puts on the table.*]

REGINA. Shall I open the bottle?

OSWALD. No, thank you, I will do it.

[REGINA *goes out.*]

MRS. ALVING [*sitting down at the table*]. What did you mean, when you asked if I could refuse you nothing?

OSWALD [*busy opening the bottle*]. Let us have a glass first —or two.

[*He draws the cork, fills one glass and is going to fill the other.*]

MRS. ALVING [*holding her hand over the second glass*]. No, thanks—not for me.

OSWALD. Oh, well, for me then! [*He empties his glass, fills it again and empties it; then sits down at the table.*]

MRS. ALVING [*expectantly*]. Now, tell me.

OSWALD [*without looking at her*]. Tell me this; I thought you and Mr. Manders seemed so strange—so quiet—at dinner.

MRS. ALVING. Did you notice that?

OSWALD. Yes. Ahem! [*After a short pause.*] Tell me—What do you think of Regina?

MRS. ALVING. What do I think of her?

OSWALD. Yes, isn't she splendid!

MRS. ALVING. Dear Oswald, you don't know her as well as I do—

OSWALD. What of that?

MRS. ALVING. Regina was too long at home, unfortunately. I ought to have taken her under my charge sooner.

OSWALD. Yes, but isn't she splendid to look at, mother? [*Fills his glass.*]

MRS. ALVING. Regina has many serious faults—

OSWALD. Yes, but what of that? [*Drinks.*]

MRS. ALVING. But I am fond of her, all the same; and I have made myself responsible for her. I wouldn't for the world she should come to any harm.

OSWALD [*jumping up*]. Mother, Regina is my only hope of salvation!

MRS. ALVING [*getting up*]. What do you mean?

OSWALD. I can't go on bearing all this agony of mind alone.

MRS. ALVING. Haven't you your mother to help you to bear it?

OSWALD. Yes, I thought so; that was why I came home to you. But it is no use; I see that it isn't. I cannot spend my life here.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald!

OSWALD. I must live a different sort of life, mother; so I shall have to go away from you. I don't want you watching it.

MRS. ALVING. My unhappy boy! But, Oswald, as long as you are ill like this—

OSWALD. If it was only a matter of feeling ill, I would stay with you, mother. You are the best friend I have in the world.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I am that, Oswald, am I not?

OSWALD [*walking restlessly about*]. But all this torment—the regret, the remorse—and the deadly fear. Oh—this horrible fear!

MRS. ALVING [*following him*]. Fear? Fear of what? What do you mean?

OSWALD. Oh, don't ask me any more about it. I don't know what it is. I can't put it into words. [MRS. ALVING *crosses the room and rings the bell.*] What do you want?

MRS. ALVING. I want my boy to be happy, that's what I want. He mustn't brood over anything. [*To* REGINA, *who has come to the door.*] More champagne—a large bottle.

OSWALD. Mother!

MRS. ALVING. Do you think we country people don't know how to live?

OSWALD. Isn't she splendid to look at? What a figure! And the picture of health!

MRS. ALVING [*sitting down at the table*]. Sit down, Oswald, and let us have a quiet talk.

OSWALD [*sitting down*]. You don't know, mother, that I owe Regina a little reparation.

MRS. ALVING. You!

OSWALD. Oh, it was only a little thoughtlessness—call it what you like. Something quite innocent, anyway. The last time I was home—

MRS. ALVING. Yes?

OSWALD. —she used often to ask me questions about Paris, and I told her one thing and another about the life there. And I remember saying one day: "Wouldn't you like to go there yourself?"

MRS. ALVING. Well?

OSWALD. I saw her blush, and she said: "Yes, I should like to very much." "All right," I said, "I daresay it might be managed"—or something of that sort.

MRS. ALVING. And then?

OSWALD. I naturally had forgotten all about it; but the day before yesterday I happened to ask her if she was glad I was to be so long at home—

MRS. ALVING. Well?

OSWALD. —and she looked so queerly at me, and asked: "But what is to become of my trip to Paris?"

MRS. ALVING. Her trip!

OSWALD. And then I got it out of her that she had taken the thing seriously, and had been thinking about me all the time, and had set herself to learn French—

MRS. ALVING. So that was why—

OSWALD. Mother—when I saw this fine, splendid, handsome girl standing there in front of me—I had never paid any attention to her before then—but now, when she stood there as if with open arms ready for me to take her to myself—

MRS. ALVING. Oswald!

OSWALD. —then I realised that my salvation lay in her, for I saw the joy of life in her.

MRS. ALVING [*starting back*]. The joy of life—? Is there salvation in that?

REGINA [*coming in from the dining-room with a bottle of champagne*]. Excuse me for being so long; but I had to go to the cellar. [*Puts the bottle down on the table.*]

OSWALD. Bring another glass, too.

REGINA [*looking at him in astonishment*]. The mistress's glass is there, sir.

OSWALD. Yes, but fetch one for yourself, Regina. [REGINA *starts, and gives a quick shy glance at* MRS. ALVING.] Well?

REGINA [*in a low and hesitating voice*]. Do you wish me to, ma'am?

MRS. ALVING. Fetch the glass, Regina. [REGINA *goes into the dining-room.*]

OSWALD [*looking after her*]. Have you noticed how well she walks?—so firmly and confidently!

MRS. ALVING. It cannot be, Oswald.

OSWALD. It is settled. You must see that. It is no use forbidding it. [REGINA *comes in with a glass, which she holds in her hand.*] Sit down, Regina. [REGINA *looks questioningly at* MRS. ALVING.]

MRS. ALVING. Sit down. [REGINA *sits down on a chair near the dining-room door, still holding the glass in her hand.*] Oswald, what was it you were saying about the joy of life?

OSWALD. Ah, mother—the joy of life! You don't know very much about that at home here. I shall never realise it here.

MRS. ALVING. Not even when you are with me?

OSWALD. Never at home. But you can't understand that.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, indeed I almost think I do understand you—now.

OSWALD. That—and the joy of work. They are really the same thing at bottom. But you don't know anything about that either.

MRS. ALVING. Perhaps you are right. Tell me some more about it, Oswald.

OSWALD. Well, all I mean is that here people are brought up to believe that work is a curse and a punishment for sin, and that life is a state of wretchedness and that the sooner we can get out of it the better.

MRS. ALVING. A vale of tears, yes. And we quite conscientiously make it so.

OSWALD. But the people over there will have none of that.

There is no one there who really believes doctrines of that kind any longer. Over there the mere fact of being alive is thought to be a matter for exultant happiness. Mother, have you noticed that everything I have painted has turned upon the joy of life?—always upon the joy of life, unfailingly. There is light there, and sunshine, and a holiday feeling—and people's faces beaming with happiness. That is why I am afraid to stay at home here with you.

MRS. ALVING. Afraid? What are you afraid of here, with me?

OSWALD. I am afraid that all these feelings that are so strong in me would degenerate into something ugly here.

MRS. ALVING [*looking steadily at him*]. Do you think that is what would happen?

OSWALD. I am certain it would. Even if one lived the same life at home here, as over there—it would never really be the same life.

MRS. ALVING [*who has listened anxiously to him, gets up with a thoughtful expression and says:*] Now I see clearly how it all happened.

OSWALD. What do you see?

MRS. ALVING. I see it now for the first time. And now I can speak.

OSWALD [*getting up*]. Mother, I don't understand you.

REGINA [*who has got up also*]. Perhaps I had better go.

MRS. ALVING. No, stay here. Now I can speak. Now, my son, you shall know the whole truth. Oswald! Regina!

OSWALD. Hush!—here is the parson—

[MANDERS *comes in by the hall door.*]

MANDERS. Well, my friends, we have been spending an edifying time over there.

OSWALD. So have we.

MANDERS. Engstrand must have help with his Sailors' Home. Regina must go home with him and give him her assistance.

REGINA. No, thank you, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS [*perceiving her for the first time*]. What—? you in here?—and with a wineglass in your hand!

REGINA [*putting down the glass hastily*]. I beg your pardon—!

OSWALD. Regina is going away with me, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. Going away! With you!

OSWALD. Yes, as my wife—if she insists on that.

MANDERS. But, good heavens—!

REGINA. It is not my fault, Mr. Manders.

OSWALD. Or else she stays here if I stay.

REGINA [*involuntarily*]. Here!

MANDERS. I am amazed at you, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. Neither of those things will happen, for now I can speak openly.

MANDERS. But you won't do that! No, no, no!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I can and I will. And without destroying any one's ideals.

OSWALD. Mother, what is it that is being concealed from me?

REGINA [*listening*]. Mrs. Alving! Listen! They are shouting outside.

[*Goes into the conservatory and looks out.*]

OSWALD [*going to the window on the left*]. What can be the matter? Where does that glare come from?

REGINA [*calls out*]. The Orphanage is on fire!

MRS. ALVING [*going to the window*]. On fire?

MANDERS. On fire? Impossible. I was there just a moment ago.

OSWALD. Where is my hat? Oh, never mind that. Father's Orphanage—!

[*Runs out through the garden door.*]

MRS. ALVING. My shawl, Regina! The whole place is in flames.

MANDERS. How terrible! Mrs. Alving, that fire is a judgment on this house of sin!

MRS. ALVING. Quite so. Come, Regina.

[*She and* REGINA *hurry out.*]

MANDERS [*clasping his hands*]. And no insurance!

[*Follows them out.*]

ACT III

[*The same scene. All the doors are standing open. The lamp is still burning on the table. It is dark outside, except for a faint glimmer of light seen through the windows at the back.* MRS. ALVING, *with a shawl over her head, is standing in the conservatory, looking out.* REGINA, *also wrapped in a shawl, is standing a little behind her.*]

MRS. ALVING. Everything burnt—down to the ground.

REGINA. It is burning still in the basement.

MRS. ALVING. I can't think why Oswald doesn't come back. There is no chance of saving anything.

REGINA. Shall I go and take his hat to him?

MRS. ALVING. Hasn't he even got his hat?

REGINA [*pointing to the hall*]. No, there it is, hanging up.

MRS. ALVING. Never mind. He is sure to come back soon. I will go and see what he is doing. [*Goes out by the garden door.* MANDERS *comes in from the hall.*]

MANDERS. Isn't Mrs. Alving here?

REGINA. She has just this moment gone down into the garden.

MANDERS. I have never spent such a terrible night in my life.

REGINA. Isn't it a shocking misfortune, sir!

MANDERS. Oh, don't speak about it. I scarcely dare to think about it.

REGINA. But how can it have happened?

MANDERS. Don't ask me, Miss Engstrand! How should I

know? Are you going to suggest too—? Isn't it enough that your father—?

REGINA. What has he done?

MANDERS. He has nearly driven me crazy.

ENGSTRAND [*coming in from the hall*]. Mr. Manders—!

MANDERS [*turning round with a start*]. Have you even followed me here!

ENGSTRAND. Yes, God help us all—! Great heavens! What a dreadful thing, your reverence!

MANDERS [*walking up and down*]. Oh dear, oh dear!

REGINA. What do you mean?

ENGSTRAND. Our little prayer-meeting was the cause of it all, don't you see? [*Aside, to* REGINA.] Now we've got the old fool, my girl. [*Aloud.*] And to think it is my fault that Mr. Manders should be the cause of such a thing!

MANDERS. I assure you, Engstrand—

ENGSTRAND. But there was no one else carrying a light there except you, sir.

MANDERS [*standing still*]. Yes, so you say. But I have no clear recollection of having had a light in my hand.

ENGSTRAND. But I saw quite distinctly your reverence take a candle and snuff it with your fingers and throw away the burning bit of wick among the shavings.

MANDERS. Did you see that?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, distinctly.

MANDERS. I can't understand it at all. It is never my habit to snuff a candle with my fingers.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, it wasn't like you to do that, sir. But who would have thought it could be such a dangerous thing to do?

MANDERS [*walking restlessly backwards and forwards*]. Oh, don't ask me!

ENGSTRAND [*following him about*]. And you hadn't insured it either, had you, sir?

MANDERS. No, no, no; you heard me say so.

ENGSTRAND. You hadn't insured it—and then went and set light to the whole place! Good Lord, what bad luck!

MANDERS [*wiping the perspiration from his forehead*]. You may well say so, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. And that it should happen to a charitable institution that would have been of service both to the town and the country, so to speak! The newspapers won't be very kind to your reverence, I expect.

MANDERS. No, that is just what I am thinking of. It is almost the worst part of the whole thing. The spiteful attacks and accusations—it is horrible to think of!

MRS. ALVING [*coming in from the garden*]. I can't get him away from the fire.

MANDERS. Oh, there you are, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. You will escape having to make your inaugural address now, at all events, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. Oh, I would so gladly have—

MRS. ALVING [*in a dull voice*]. It is just as well it has happened. This Orphanage would never have come to any good.

MANDERS. Don't you think so?

MRS. ALVING. Do you?

MANDERS. But it is none the less an extraordinary piece of ill luck.

MRS. ALVING. We will discuss it simply as a business matter.—Are you waiting for Mr. Manders, Engstrand?

ENGSTRAND [*at the hall door*]. Yes, I am.

MRS. ALVING. Sit down then, while you are waiting.

ENGSTRAND. Thank you, I would rather stand.

MRS. ALVING [*to* MANDERS]. I suppose you are going by the boat?

MANDERS. Yes. It goes in about an hour.

MRS. ALVING. Please take all the documents back with you. I don't want to hear another word about the matter. I have something else to think about now—

MANDERS. Mrs. Alving—

MRS. ALVING. Later on I will send you a power of attorney to deal with it exactly as you please.

MANDERS. I shall be most happy to undertake that. I am

afraid the original intention of the bequest will have to be entirely altered now.

MRS. ALVING. Of course.

MANDERS. Provisionally, I should suggest this way of disposing of it. Make over the Solvik property to the parish. The land is undoubtedly not without a certain value; it will always be useful for some purpose or another. And as for the interest on the remaining capital that is on deposit in the bank, possibly I might make suitable use of that in support of some undertaking that promises to be of use to the town.

MRS. ALVING. Do exactly as you please. The whole thing is a matter of indifference to me now.

ENGSTRAND. You will think of my Sailors' Home, Mr. Manders?

MANDERS. Yes, certainly, that is a suggestion. But we must consider the matter carefully.

ENGSTRAND [*aside*]. Consider!—devil take it! Oh Lord.

MANDERS [*sighing*]. And unfortunately I can't tell how much longer I may have anything to do with the matter—whether public opinion may not force me to retire from it altogether. That depends entirely upon the result of the inquiry into the cause of the fire.

MRS. ALVING. What do you say?

MANDERS. And one cannot in any way reckon upon the result beforehand.

ENGSTRAND [*going nearer to him*]. Yes, indeed one can; because here stand I, Jacob Engstrand.

MANDERS. Quite so, but—

ENGSTRAND [*lowering his voice*]. And Jacob Engstrand isn't the man to desert a worthy benefactor in the hour of need, as the saying is.

MANDERS. Yes, but, my dear fellow—how—?

ENGSTRAND. You might say Jacob Engstrand is an angel of salvation, so to speak, your reverence.

MANDERS. No, no, I couldn't possibly accept that.

ENGSTRAND. That's how it will be, all the same. I know

some one who has taken the blame for some one else on his shoulders before now, I do.

MANDERS. Jacob! [*Grasps his hand.*] You are one in a thousand! You shall have assistance in the matter of your Sailors' Home, you may rely upon that.

[ENGSTRAND *tries to thank him, but is prevented by emotion.*]

MANDERS [*hanging his wallet over his shoulder*]. Now we must be off. We will travel together.

ENGSTRAND [*by the dining-room door, says aside to* REGINA]. Come with me, you hussy! You shall be as cosy as the yolk in an egg!

REGINA [*tossing her head*]. *Merci!*

[*She goes out into the hall and brings back* MANDERS' *luggage.*]

MANDERS. Good-bye, Mrs. Alving! And may the spirit of order and what is lawful speedily enter into this house.

MRS. ALVING. Good-bye, Mr. Manders.

[*She goes into the conservatory, as she sees* OSWALD *coming in by the garden door.*]

ENGSTRAND [*as he and* REGINA *are helping* MANDERS *on with his coat*]. Good-bye, my child. And if anything should happen to you, you know where Jacob Engstrand is to be found. [*Lowering his voice.*] Little Harbour Street, ahem—! [*To* MRS. ALVING *and* OSWALD.] And my house for poor seafaring men shall be called the "Alving Home," it shall. And, if I can carry out my own ideas about it, I shall make bold to hope that it may be worthy of bearing the late Mr. Alving's name.

MANDERS [*at the door*]. Ahem—ahem! Come along, my dear Engstrand. Good-bye—good-bye!

[*He and* ENGSTRAND *go out by the hall door.*]

OSWALD [*going to the table*]. What house was he speaking about?

MRS. ALVING. I believe it is some sort of a Home that he and Mr. Manders want to start.

OSWALD. It will be burnt up just like this one.

MRS. ALVING. What makes you think that?

OSWALD. Everything will be burnt up; nothing will be left that is in memory of my father. Here am I being burnt up, too.

[REGINA *looks at him in alarm.*]

MRS. ALVING. Oswald! You should not have stayed so long over there, my poor boy.

OSWALD [*sitting down at the table*]. I almost believe you are right.

MRS. ALVING. Let me dry your face, Oswald; you are all wet. [*Wipes his face with her handkerchief.*]

OSWALD [*looking straight before him, with no expression in his eyes*]. Thank you, mother.

MRS. ALVING. And aren't you tired, Oswald? Don't you want to go to sleep?

OSWALD [*uneasily*]. No, no—not to sleep! I never sleep; I only pretend to. [*Gloomily.*] That will come soon enough.

MRS. ALVING [*looking at him anxiously*]. Anyhow you are really ill, my darling boy.

REGINA [*intently*]. Is Mr. Alving ill?

OSWALD [*impatiently*]. And do shut all the doors! This deadly fear—

MRS. ALVING. Shut the doors, Regina. [REGINA *shuts the doors and remains standing by the hall door.* MRS. ALVING *takes off her shawl;* REGINA *does the same.* MRS. ALVING *draws up a chair near to* OSWALD'S *and sits down beside him.*] That's it! Now I will sit beside you—

OSWALD. Yes, do. And Regina must stay in here too. Regina must always be near me. You must give me a helping hand, you know, Regina. Won't you do that?

REGINA. I don't understand—

MRS. ALVING. A helping hand?

OSWALD. Yes—when there is need for it.

Mrs. Alving. Oswald, have you not your mother to give you a helping hand?

Oswald. You! [*Smiles.*] No, mother, you will never give me the kind of helping hand I mean. [*Laughs grimly.*] You! Ha, ha! [*Looks gravely at her.*] After all, you have the best right. [*Impetuously.*] Why don't you call me by my Christian name, Regina? Why don't you say Oswald?

Regina [*in a low voice*]. I did not think Mrs. Alving would like it.

Mrs. Alving. It will not be long before you have the right to do it. Sit down here now beside us, too. [Regina *sits down quietly and hesitatingly at the other side of the table.*] And now, my poor tortured boy, I am going to take the burden off your mind—

Oswald. You, mother?

Mrs. Alving. —all that you call remorse and regret and self-reproach.

Oswald. And you think you can do that?

Mrs. Alving. Yes, now I can, Oswald. A little while ago you were talking about the joy of life, and what you said seemed to shed a new light upon everything in my whole life.

Oswald [*shaking his head*]. I don't in the least understand what you mean.

Mrs. Alving. You should have known your father in his young days in the army. He was full of the joy of life, I can tell you.

Oswald. Yes, I know.

Mrs. Alving. It gave me a holiday feeling only to look at him, full of irrepressible energy and exuberant spirits.

Oswald. What then?

Mrs. Alving. Well, then this boy, full of the joy of life—for he was just like a boy, then—had to make his home in a second-rate town which had none of the joy of life to offer him, but only dissipations. He had to come out here and live an aimless life; he had only an official post. He had no work worth devoting his whole mind to; he had nothing more than official routine to attend to. He had not a single companion

capable of appreciating what the joy of life meant; nothing but idlers and tipplers—

OSWALD. Mother—!

MRS. ALVING. And so the inevitable happened!

OSWALD. What was the inevitable?

MRS. ALVING. You said yourself this evening what would happen in your case if you stayed at home.

OSWALD. Do you mean by that, that father—?

MRS. ALVING. Your poor father never found any outlet for the overmastering joy of life that was in him. And I brought no holiday spirit into his home, either.

OSWALD. You didn't, either?

MRS. ALVING. I had been taught about duty, and the sort of thing that I believed in so long here. Everything seemed to turn upon duty—my duty, or his duty—and I am afraid I made your poor father's home unbearable to him, Oswald.

OSWALD. Why did you never say anything about it to me in your letters?

MRS. ALVING. I never look at it as a thing I could speak of to you, who were his son.

OSWALD. What way did you look at it, then?

MRS. ALVING. I only saw the one fact, that your father was a lost man before ever you were born.

OSWALD [*in a choking voice*]. Ah—! [*He gets up and goes to the window.*]

MRS. ALVING. And then I had the one thought in my mind, day and night, that Regina in fact had as good a right in this house—as my own boy had.

OSWALD [*turns round suddenly*]. Regina—?

REGINA [*gets up and asks in choking tones*]. I—?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, now you both know it.

OSWALD. Regina!

REGINA [*to herself*]. So mother was one of that sort too.

MRS. ALVING. Your mother had many good qualities, Regina.

REGINA. Yes, but she was one of that sort too, all the same. I have even thought so myself, sometimes, but—. Then, if

you please, Mrs. Alving, may I have permission to leave at once?

MRS. ALVING. Do you really wish to, Regina?

REGINA. Yes, indeed, I certainly wish to.

MRS. ALVING. Of course you shall do as you like, but—

OSWALD [*going up to* REGINA]. Leave now? This is your home.

REGINA. *Merci,* Mr. Alving—oh, of course I may say Oswald now, but that is not the way I thought it would become allowable.

MRS. ALVING. Regina, I have not been open with you—

REGINA. No, I can't say you have! If I had known Oswald was ill—. And now that there can never be anything serious between us—. No, I really can't stay here in the country and wear myself out looking after invalids.

OSWALD. Not even for the sake of one who has so near a claim on you?

REGINA. No, indeed I can't. A poor girl must make some use of her youth, otherwise she may easily find herself out in the cold before she knows where she is. And I have got the joy of life in me, too, Mrs. Alving!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, unfortunately; but don't throw yourself away, Regina.

REGINA. Oh, what's going to happen will happen. If Oswald takes after his father, it is just as likely I take after my mother, I expect.—May I ask, Mrs. Alving, whether Mr. Manders knows this about me?

MRS. ALVING. Mr. Manders knows everything.

REGINA [*putting on her shawl*]. Oh, well then, the best thing I can do is to get away by the boat as soon as I can. Mr. Manders is such a nice gentleman to deal with; and it certainly seems to me that I have just as much right to some of that money as he—as that horrid carpenter.

MRS. ALVING. You are quite welcome to it, Regina.

REGINA [*looking at her fixedly*]. You might as well have brought me up like a gentleman's daughter; it would have been more suitable. [*Tosses her head.*] Oh, well—never

mind! [*With a bitter glance at the unopened bottle.*] I daresay some day I shall be drinking champagne with gentlefolk, after all.

MRS. ALVING. If ever you need a home, Regina, come to me.

REGINA. No, thank you, Mrs. Alving. Mr. Manders takes an interest in me, I know. And if things should go very badly with me, I know one house at any rate where I shall feel at home.

MRS. ALVING. Where is that?

REGINA. In the "Alving Home."

MRS. ALVING. Regina—I can see quite well—you are going to your ruin!

REGINA. Pooh!—good-bye.

[*She bows to them and goes out through the hall.*]

OSWALD [*standing by the window and looking out*]. Has she gone?

MRS. ALVING. Yes.

OSWALD [*muttering to himself*]. I think it's all wrong.

MRS. ALVING [*going up to him from behind and putting her hands on his shoulders*]. Oswald, my dear boy—has it been a great shock to you?

OSWALD [*turning his face towards her*]. All this about father, do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, about your unhappy father. I am so afraid it may have been too much for you.

OSWALD. What makes you think that? Naturally it has taken me entirely by surprise; but, after all, I don't know that it matters much to me.

MRS. ALVING [*drawing back her hands*]. Doesn't matter! —that your father's life was such a terrible failure!

OSWALD. Of course I can feel sympathy for him, just as I would for anyone else, but—

MRS. ALVING. No more than that! For your own father!

OSWALD [*impatiently*]. Father—father! I never knew

anything of my father. I don't remember anything else about him except that he once made me sick.

MRS. ALVING. It is dreadful to think of!—But surely a child should feel some affection for his father, whatever happens?

OSWALD. When the child has nothing to thank his father for? When he has never known him? Do you really cling to that antiquated superstition—you, who are so broadminded in other things?

MRS. ALVING. You call it nothing but a superstition!

OSWALD. Yes, and you can see that for yourself quite well, mother. It is one of those beliefs that are put into circulation in the world, and—

MRS. ALVING. Ghosts of beliefs!

OSWALD [*walking across the room*]. Yes, you might call them ghosts.

MRS. ALVING [*with an outburst of feeling*]. Oswald—then you don't love me either!

OSWALD. You I know, at any rate—

MRS. ALVING. You know me, yes; but is that all?

OSWALD. And I know how fond you are of me, and I ought to be grateful to you for that. Besides, you can be so tremendously useful to me, now that I am ill.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, can't I, Oswald! I could almost bless your illness, as it has driven you home to me. For I see quite well that you are not my very own yet; you must be won.

OSWALD [*impatiently*]. Yes, yes, yes; all that is just a way of talking. You must remember I am a sick man, mother. I can't concern myself much with anyone else; I have enough to do, thinking about myself.

MRS. ALVING [*gently*]. I will be very good and patient.

OSWALD. And cheerful too, mother!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, my dear boy, you are quite right. [*Goes up to him.*] Now have I taken away all your remorse and self-reproach?

OSWALD. Yes, you have done that. But who will take away the fear?

MRS. ALVING. The fear?

OSWALD [*crossing the room*]. Regina would have done it for one kind word.

MRS. ALVING. I don't understand you. What fear do you mean—and what has Regina to do with it?

OSWALD. Is it very late, mother?

MRS. ALVING. It is early morning. [*Looks out through the conservatory windows.*] The dawn is breaking already on the heights. And the sky is clear, Oswald. In a little while you will see the sun.

OSWALD. I am glad of that. After all, there may be many things yet for me to be glad of and to live for—

MRS. ALVING. I should hope so!

OSWALD. Even if I am not able to work—

MRS. ALVING. You will soon find you are able to work again now, my dear boy. You have no longer all those painful depressing thoughts to brood over.

OSWALD. No, it is a good thing that you have been able to rid me of those fancies. If only, now, I could overcome this one thing—. [*Sits down on the couch.*] Let us have a little chat, mother.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, let us. [*Pushes an armchair near to the couch and sits down beside him.*]

OSWALD. The sun is rising—and you know all about it; so I don't feel the fear any longer.

MRS. ALVING. I know all about what?

OSWALD [*without listening to her*]. Mother, isn't it the case that you said this evening there was nothing in the world you would not do for me if I asked you?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, certainly I said so.

OSWALD. And will you be as good as your word, mother?

MRS. ALVING. You may rely upon that, my own dear boy. I have nothing else to live for, but you.

OSWALD. Yes, yes; well, listen to me, mother. You are very strong-minded, I know. I want you to sit quite quiet when you hear what I am going to tell you.

MRS. ALVING. But what is this dreadful thing—?

OSWALD. You mustn't scream. Do you hear? Will you promise me that? We are going to sit and talk it over quite quietly. Will you promise me that, mother?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes, I promise—only tell me what it is.

OSWALD. Well, then, you must know that this fatigue of mine—and my not being able to think about my work—all that is not really the illness itself—

MRS. ALVING. What is the illness itself?

OSWALD. What I am suffering from is hereditary; it—[*touches his forehead, and speaks very quietly*]—it lies here.

MRS. ALVING [*almost speechless*]. Oswald! No—no!

OSWALD. Don't scream; I can't stand it. Yes, I tell you, it lies here, waiting. And any time, any moment, it may break out.

MRS. ALVING. How horrible—!

OSWALD. Do keep quiet. That is the state I am in—

MRS. ALVING [*springing up*]. It isn't true, Oswald! It is impossible! It can't be that!

OSWALD. I had one attack while I was abroad. It passed off quickly. But when I learnt the condition I had been in, then this dreadful haunting fear took possession of me.

MRS. ALVING. That was the fear, then—

OSWALD. Yes, it is so indescribably horrible, you know. If only it had been an ordinary mortal disease—. I am not so much afraid of dying; though, of course, I should like to live as long as I can.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes, Oswald, you must!

OSWALD. But this is so appallingly horrible. To become like a helpless child again—to have to be fed, to have to be—Oh, it's unspeakable!

MRS. ALVING. My child has his mother to tend him.

OSWALD [*jumping up*]. No, never; that is just what I won't endure! I dare not think what it would mean to linger on like that for years—to get old and grey like that. And you might die before I did. [*Sits down in* MRS. ALVING'S *chair.*] Because it doesn't necessarily have a fatal end quickly, the doctor said. He called it a kind of softening of the brain—

or something of that sort. [*Smiles mournfully.*] I think that expression sounds so nice. It always makes me think of cherry-coloured velvet curtains—something that is soft to stroke.

MRS. ALVING [*with a scream*]. Oswald!

OSWALD [*jumps up and walks about the room*]. And now you have taken Regina from me! If I had only had her. She would have given me a helping hand, I know.

MRS. ALVING [*going up to him*]. What do you mean, my darling boy? Is there any help in the world I would not be willing to give you?

OSWALD. When I had recovered from the attack I had abroad, the doctor told me that when it recurred—and it will recur—there would be no more hope.

MRS. ALVING. And he was heartless enough to—

OSWALD. I insisted on knowing. I told him I had arrangements to make—. [*Smiles cunningly.*] And so I had. [*Takes a small box from his inner breast-pocket.*] Mother, do you see this?

MRS. ALVING. What is it?

OSWALD. Morphia powders.

MRS. ALVING [*looking at him in terror*]. Oswald—my boy!

OSWALD. I have twelve of them saved up—

MRS. ALVING [*snatching at it*]. Give me the box, Oswald!

OSWALD. Not yet, mother. [*Puts it back in his pocket.*]

MRS. ALVING. I shall never get over this!

OSWALD. You must. If I had had Regina here now, I would have told her quietly how things stand with me—and asked her to give me this last helping hand. She would have helped me, I am certain.

MRS. ALVING. Never!

OSWALD. If this horrible thing had come upon me and she had seen me lying helpless, like a baby, past help, past saving, past hope—with no chance of recovering—

MRS. ALVING. Never in the world would Regina have done it.

OSWALD. Regina would have done it. Regina was so

splendidly light-hearted. And she would very soon have tired of looking after an invalid like me.

MRS. ALVING. Then thank heaven Regina is not here!

OSWALD. Well, now you have got to give me that helping hand, mother.

MRS. ALVING [*with a loud scream*]. I!

OSWALD. Who has a better right than you?

MRS. ALVING. I! Your mother!

OSWALD. Just for that reason.

MRS. ALVING. I, who gave you your life!

OSWALD. I never asked you for life. And what kind of a life was it that you gave me? I don't want it! You shall take it back!

MRS. ALVING. Help! Help! [*Runs into the hall.*]

OSWALD [*following her*]. Don't leave me! Where are you going?

MRS. ALVING [*in the hall*]. To fetch the doctor to you, Oswald! Let me out!

OSWALD [*going into the hall*]. You shan't go out. And no one shall come in. [*Turns the key in the lock.*]

MRS. ALVING [*coming in again*]. Oswald! Oswald!—my child!

OSWALD [*following her*]. Have you a mother's heart—and can bear to see me suffering this unspeakable terror?

MRS. ALVING [*controlling herself, after a moment's silence*]. There is my hand on it.

OSWALD. Will you—?

MRS. ALVING. If it becomes necessary. But it shan't become necessary. No, no—it is impossible it should!

OSWALD. Let us hope so. And let us live together as long as we can. Thank you mother.

[*He sits down in the armchair, which* MRS. ALVING *had moved beside the couch. Day is breaking; the lamp is still burning on the table.*]

MRS. ALVING [*coming cautiously nearer*]. Do you feel calmer now?

OSWALD. Yes.

MRS. ALVING (*bending over him*). It has only been a dreadful fancy of yours, Oswald. Nothing but fancy. All this upset has been bad for you. But now you will get some rest, at home with your own mother, my darling boy. You shall have everything you want, just as you did when you were a little child.—There, now. The attack is over. You see how easily it passed off! I knew it would.—And look, Oswald, what a lovely day we are going to have? Brilliant sunshine. Now you will be able to see your home properly. [*She goes to the table and puts out the lamp. It is sunrise. The glaciers and peaks in the distance are seen bathed in bright morning light.*]

OSWALD [*who has been sitting motionless in the armchair, with his back to the scene outside, suddenly says:*] Mother, give me the sun.

MRS. ALVING [*standing at the table, and looking at him in amazement*]. What do you say?

OSWALD [*repeats in a dull, toneless voice*]. The sun—the sun.

MRS. ALVING [*going up to him*]. Oswald, what is the matter with you? [OSWALD *seems to shrink up in the chair; all his muscles relax; his face loses its expression, and his eyes stare stupidly.* MRS. ALVING *is trembling with terror.*] What is it! [*Screams.*] Oswald! What is the matter with you! [*Throws herself on her knees beside him and shakes him.*] Oswald! Oswald! Look at me! Don't you know me!

OSWALD [*in an expressionless voice, as before*]. The sun—the sun.

MRS. ALVING [*jumps up despairingly, beats her head with her hands, and screams*]. I can't bear it! [*Whispers as though paralyzed with fear.*] I can't bear it! Never! [*Suddenly.*] Where has he got it? [*Passes her hand quickly over his coat.*] Here! [*Draws back a little way and cries:*] No, no, no!—Yes!—no, no! [*She stands a few steps from him, her hands thrust into her hair, and stares at him in speechless terror.*]

OSWALD [*sitting motionless, as before*]. The sun—the sun.

THE WEAVERS

A DRAMA OF THE FORTIES

BY

GERHART HAUPTMANN

(1893)

Translated from the German by Mary Morison

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INTRODUCTION

Gerhart Hauptmann is distinguished as the master of German drama in both its poetic and naturalistic phases. He can write poetic and romantic dramas like *The Sunken Bell,* or, in harmony with Ibsen and modern tragic theory, can stage an overwhelming indictment of the social order. In following the tenets of naturalism *The Weavers* is more thoroughly consistent than Ibsen's *Ghosts,* for the former strives to make art identical with nature, the latter to make nature subserve the ends of art. Ibsen employs the age-old methods of selection, arrangement, and unification; Hauptmann, in avoiding them as much as possible, rejects the whole tradition of structural technique. From the standpoint of naturalism it is an impertinence for the artist to impose his imagination upon the reality of experience; he should rather respond to life sensitively and record accurately its ebb and flow.

Let us consider briefly the principles of drama which Hauptmann abandoned in writing *The Weavers.* This play has no dramatic economy of plot, character, or setting. Like the stream of human life, there is no beginning, middle, or end, no plot weaving to a culmination in a tragic catastrophe, but a succession of scenes depicting the conditions of the weavers in their struggle against a hostile and oppressive environment, and ending in revolution. There are no characters in the dramatic sense of the term, no personal struggles of love, honor, and duty, but the strife of one class with another. The protagonist is no individual, but the group of weavers ground down by Dreissiger and Pfeifer, managers of the capitalist class. There are rich contrasts, however, among the forty people crowded into this play. They represent a cross-section of the social environment. On the one side are the manufacturer, and those in his household and employ; the clergyman, the police, the publican, the joiner and other representatives of trades dependent upon the capitalist class. On the

other side are the weavers and sympathizers with them, like Moritz Jaeger of the army. The weavers are also divided into the majority of revolutionists like Becker, Ansorge, and Baumert, and the minority of conservatives like Old Hilse. Moreover, many of the characters stream in and out of the play, reappear or disappear; and new characters are introduced in each act. The setting is likewise varied. The five acts take us into three different towns, and each act presents a new setting: (1) in the manufacturer's shop; (2) in a radical weaver's cottage; (3) in a public house; (4) in the manufacturer's parlor; (5) in a conservative weaver's cottage.

Hauptmann has also discarded all tricks of the stage such as monologue, discovery, disguise, mistaken identity, asides,—in fact all of the technique practised by dramatists like Scribe, or Pinero, who strive for theatrical effectiveness by constructing 'well-made' plays. Moreover, he has relinquished poetry, or heightened style in favor of a native prose dialogue which catches the inflections and falterings of the human voice.

Like other modern tragedies, *The Weavers* depicts a social organization which drives human beings to frenzies of despair and revolt, and which arouses pity, distress, and indignation over the poverty, cruelty, and waste it causes. Hauptmann's family tradition, however, has brought home to him so deeply the oppression of the weavers that he violates the objective creed of naturalism by surcharging the play with sympathy for one class. Accordingly, in *The Weavers* he has dramatized a socialist tract, which implicitly teaches that the only solution of class warfare is a revolution of the proletariat. This doctrine Hauptmann derived from his reading of Karl Marx, just as he derived his naturalism from Zola and Ibsen. Galsworthy, who depicts a similar class warfare in *Strife,* succeeds in keeping the balance even, and preaches the opposite doctrine that strife between classes results only in waste and stultification. *The Weavers,* however, is an excellent example of that type of modern tragedy known as the propaganda play, but as an example of naturalism in the strictest meaning of the term, it falls short of Gorki's *The Lower Depths.*

TEXT OF THE PLAY

I DEDICATE THIS DRAMA

TO MY FATHER

ROBERT HAUPTMANN

You, dear Father, know what feelings lead me to dedicate this work to you, and I am not called upon to analyze them here. Your stories of my grandfather, who in his young days sat at the loom, a poor weaver like those here depicted, contained the germ of my drama. Whether it possesses the vigor of life or is rotten at the core, it is the best, "so poor a man as Hamlet is" can offer.

Yours,

GERHART.

COMPLETE LIST OF CHARACTERS

DREISSIGER, *fustian manufacturer*

MRS. DREISSIGER

PFEIFER, *manager* } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment*

NEUMANN, *cashier* } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment*

AN APPRENTICE } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment*

JOHN, *coachman* } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment*

A MAID } *in* DREISSIGER'S *employment*

WEINHOLD, *tutor to* DREISSIGER'S *sons*

PASTOR KITTELHAUS

MRS. KITTELHAUS

HEIDE, *Police Superintendent*

KUTSCHE, *policeman*

WELZEL, *publican*

MRS. WELZEL

ANNA WELZEL

WIEGAND, *joiner*

A COMMERCIAL TRAVELER

A PEASANT

A FORESTER

SCHMIDT, *surgeon*

HORNIG, *rag dealer*

WITTIG, *smith*

WEAVERS

BECKER

MORITZ JAEGER

OLD BAUMERT

MOTHER BAUMERT

BERTHA } BAUMERT

EMMA } BAUMERT

FRITZ, EMMA'S *son* (*four years old*)

AUGUST BAUMERT

OLD ANSORGE

MRS. HEINRICH

OLD HILSE

MOTHER HILSE

GOTTLIEB HILSE

LUISE, GOTTLIEB'S *wife*

MIELCHEN, *their daughter* (*six years old*)

REIMANN, *weaver*

HEIBER, *weaver*

A WEAVER'S WIFE

A number of weavers, young and old, of both sexes

The action passes in the Forties, at Kaschbach, Peterswaldau and Langenbielau, in the Eulengebirge

THE WEAVERS

THE FIRST ACT

A large whitewashed room on the ground floor of DREISSIGER'S *house at Peterswaldau, where the weavers deliver their finished webs and the fustian is stored. To the left are uncurtained windows, in the back wall there is a glass door, and to the right another glass door, through which weavers, male and female, and children, are passing in and out. All three walls are lined with shelves for the storing of the fustian. Against the right wall stands a long bench, on which a number of weavers have already spread out their cloth. In the order of arrival each presents his piece to be examined by* PFEIFER, DREISSIGER'S *manager, who stands, with compass and magnifying-glass, behind a large table, on which the web to be inspected is laid. When* PFEIFER *has satisfied himself, the weaver lays the fustian on the scale, and an office apprentice tests its weight. The same boy stores the accepted pieces on the shelves.* PFEIFER *calls out the payment due in each case to* NEUMANN, *the cashier, who is seated at a small table.*

It is a sultry day toward the end of May. The clock is on the stroke of twelve. Most of the waiting work-people have the air of standing before the bar of justice, in torturing expectation of a decision that means life or death to them. They are marked, too, by the anxious timidity characteristic of the receiver of charity, who has suffered many humiliations, and, conscious that he is barely tolerated, has acquired the habit of self-effacement. Add to this an expression on every face that tells of constant, fruitless brooding. There is a general resemblance among the men. They have something about them of

the dwarf, something of the schoolmaster. The majority are flat-breasted, short-winded, sallow, and poor looking—creatures of the loom, their knees bent with much sitting. At a first glance the women show fewer typical traits. They look over-driven, worried, reckless, whereas the men still make some show of a pitiful self-respect; and their clothes are ragged, while the men's are patched and mended. Some of the young girls are not without a certain charm, consisting in a wax-like pallor, a slender figure, and large, projecting, melancholy eyes.

NEUMANN [*counting money*]. Comes to one and sevenpence halfpenny.

WEAVER'S WIFE. [*About thirty, emaciated, takes up the money with trembling fingers.*] Thank you, sir.

NEUMANN [*seeing that she does not move on*]. Well, something wrong this time, too?

WEAVER'S WIFE [*agitated, imploringly*]. Do you think I might have a few pence in advance, sir? I need it that bad.

NEUMANN. And I need a few pounds. If it was only a question of needing it—! [*Already occupied in counting out another weaver's money, shortly.*] It 's Mr. Dreissiger who settles about pay in advance.

WEAVER'S WIFE. Could'nt I speak to Mr. Dreissiger himself, then, sir?

PFEIFER. [*Now manager, formerly weaver. The type is unmistakable, only he is well fed, well dressed, clean-shaven; also takes snuff copiously. He calls out roughly.*] Mr. Dreissiger would have enough to do if he had to attend to every trifle himself. That 's what we are here for. [*He measures, and then examines through the magnifying-glass.*] Mercy on us! what a draught! [*Puts a thick muffler round his neck.*] Shut the door, whoever comes in.

APPRENTICE [*loudly to* PFEIFER]. You might as well talk to stocks and stones.

PFEIFER. That 's done!—Weigh! [*The weaver places his web on the scales.*] If you only understood your business a

little better! Full of lumps again. . . . I hardly need to look at the cloth to see them. Call yourself a weaver, and "draw as long a bow" as you 've done there!

[Becker *has entered. A young, exceptionally powerfully-built weaver; offhand, almost bold in manner.* Pfeifer, Neumann, *and the* Apprentice *exchange looks of mutual understanding as he comes in.*]

Becker. Devil take it! This is a sweating job, and no mistake..

First Weaver [*in a low voice*]. This blazing heat means rain.

[Old Baumert *forces his way in at the glass door on the right, through which the crowd of weavers can be seen, standing shoulder to shoulder, waiting their turn. The old man stumbles forward and lays his bundle on the bench, beside* Becker's. *He sits down by it, and wipes the sweat from his face.*]

Old Baumert. A man has a right to a rest after that.

Becker. Rest 's better than money.

Old Baumert. Yes, but we *needs* the money, too. Good-mornin' to you, Becker!

Becker. Morning, Father Baumert! Goodness knows how long we'll have to stand here again.

First Weaver. And what does that matter? What's to hinder a weaver waitin' for an hour, or for a day if need be? What else is he there for?

Pfeifer. Silence there! We can't hear own our voices.

Becker [*in a low voice*]. This is one of his bad days.

Pfeifer. [*To the weaver standing before him.*] How often have I told you that you must bring cleaner cloth? What sort of mess is this? Knots, and straw, and all kinds of dirt.

Reimann. It's for want of a new picker, sir.

Apprentice. [*Has weighed the piece.*] Short weight, too.

Pfeifer. I never saw such weavers. I hate to give out the yarn to them. It was another story in my day! I 'd have

caught it finely from my master for work like that. The business was carried on in different style then. A man had to know his trade—that's the last thing that's thought of nowadays. Reimann, one shilling.

REIMANN. But there 's always a pound allowed for waste.

PFEIFER. I've no time. Next man!—What have you to show?

HEIBER. [*Lays his web on the table. While* PFEIFER *is examining it, he goes close up to him; eagerly in a low tone.*] Beg pardon, Mr. Pfeifer, but I wanted to ask you, sir, if you would perhaps be so very kind as do me the favor an' not take my advance money off this week's pay.

PFEIFER [*measuring and examining the texture; jeeringly*]. Well! What next, I wonder? This looks very much as if half the weft had stuck to the bobbins again.

HEIBER. [*Continues.*] I'll be sure to make it all right next week, sir. But this last week I 've had to put in two days' work on the estate. And my missus is ill in bed. . . .

PFEIFER [*giving the web to be weighed*]. Another piece of real slop-work. [*Already examining a new web.*] What a selvage! Here it's broad, there it's narrow; here it's drawn in by the wefts goodness knows how tight, and there it's torn out again by the temples. And hardly seventy threads weft to the inch. What 's come of the rest? Do you call this honest work? I never saw anything like it.

[HEIBER, *repressing tears, stands humiliated and helpless.*]

BECKER [*in a low voice to* BAUMERT]. To please that brute you would have to pay for extra yarn out of your own pocket.

[*The* WEAVER'S WIFE, *who has remained standing near the cashier's table, from time to time looking round appealingly, takes courage and once more comes forward.*]

WEAVER'S WIFE. [*To cashier imploringly.*] I don't know what's to come of me, sir, if you won't give me a little advance this time—O Lord, O Lord!

PFEIFER. [*Calls across.*] It's no good whining, or drag-

ging the Lord's name into the matter. You're not so anxious about Him at other times. You look after your husband and see that he 's not to be found so often lounging in the public house. We can give no pay in advance. We have to account for every penny. It's not our money. People that are industrious, and understand their work, and do it in the fear of God, never need their pay in advance. So now you know.

NEUMANN. If a Bielau weaver got four times as much pay, he would squander it four times over and be in debt into the bargain.

WEAVER'S WIFE [*in a loud voice, as if appealing to the general sense of justice*]. No one can't call me idle, but I'm not fit now for what I once was. I've twice had a miscarriage. And as to John, he's but a poor creature. He's been to the shepherd at Zerlau, but he could n't do him no good and . . . you can't do more than you've strength for. . . . We works as hard as ever we can. This many a week I've been at it till far on into the night. An' we 'll keep our heads above water right enough if I can just get a bit of strength into me. But you must have pity on us, Mr. Pfeifer, sir. [*Eagerly, coaxingly.*] You 'll please be so very kind as to let me have a few pence on the next job, sir?

PFEIFER [*paying no attention*]. Fiedler, one and twopence.

WEAVER'S WIFE. Only a few pence, to buy bread with. We can't get no more credit. We 've a lot of little ones.

NEUMANN [*half aside to the* APPRENTICE, *in a serio-comic tone*]. "Every year brings a child to the linen-weaver's wife, heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh."

APPRENTICE. [*Takes up the rhyme, half singing.*] "And the little brat it's blind the first weeks of his life, heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh."

REIMANN [*not touching the money which the cashier has counted out to him*]. We've always got one and fourpence for the web.

PFEIFER. [*Calls across.*] If our terms don't suit you, Reimann, you have only to say so. There's no scarcity of weavers —especially of your sort. For full weight we give full pay.

REIMANN. How anything can be wrong with the weight is past . . .

PFEIFER. You bring a piece of fustian with no faults in it, and there will be no fault in the pay.

REIMANN. It 's not possible that there 's too many knots in this web.

PFEIFER [*examining*]. If you want to live well, then be sure you weave well.

HEIBER. [*Has remained standing near* PFEIFER, *so as to seize on any favorable opportunity. He laughs at* PFEIFER'S *little witticism, then steps forward and again addresses him.*] I wanted to ask you, sir, if you would perhaps have the great kindness not to take my advance of sixpence off today 's pay? My missus has been bedridden since February. She can't do a hand's turn for me, and I've to pay a bobbin girl. And so . . .

PFEIFER. [*Takes a pinch of snuff.*] Heiber, do you think I have no one to attend to but you? The others must have their turn.

REIMANN. As the warp was given me I took it home and fastened it to the beam. I can't bring back better yarn than I get.

PFEIFER. If you are not satisfied, you need come for no more. There are plenty ready to tramp the soles off their shoes to get it.

NEUMANN. [*To* REIMANN.] Do you not want your money?

REIMANN. I can't bring myself to take such pay.

NEUMANN [*paying no further attention to* REIMANN]. Heiber, one shilling. Deduct sixpence for pay in advance. Leave sixpence.

HEIBER. [*Goes up to the table, looks at the money, stands shaking his head as if unable to believe his eyes, then slowly takes it up.*] Well, I never!—[*Sighing.*] Oh, dear, oh, dear!

OLD BAUMERT [*looking into* HEIBER'S *face*]. Yes, Franz, that's so! There's matter enough for sighing.

HEIBER [*speaking with difficulty*]. I've a girl lying sick at home, too, an' she needs a bottle of medicine.

OLD BAUMERT. What's wrong with her?

HEIBER. Well, you see, she's always been a sickly bit of a thing. I don't know. . . . I need n't mind tellin' you—she brought her trouble with her. It's her blood, and it breaks out here, there, and everywhere.

OLD BAUMERT. It's always the way. Let folks be poor, and one trouble comes to them on the top of another. There's no help for it and there 's no end to it.

HEIBER. What are you carryin' in that cloth, Father Baumert?

OLD BAUMERT. We have n't so much as a bite in the house, and so I've had the little dog killed. There's not much on him, for the poor beast was half starved. A nice little dog he was! I couldn't kill him myself. I hadn't the heart to do it.

PFEIFER. [*Has inspected* BECKER'S *web—calls.*] Becker, one and threepence.

BECKER. That's what you might give to a beggar: it's not pay.

PFEIFER. Every one who has been attended to must clear out. We have 'nt room to turn round in.

BECKER. [*To those standing near, without lowering his voice.*] It's a beggarly pittance, nothing else. A man works his treadle from early morning till late at night, an' when he has bent over his loom for days an' days, tired to death every evening, sick with the dust and heat, he finds he 's made a beggarly one and threepence!

PFEIFER. No impudence allowed here.

BECKER. If you think I 'll hold my tongue for your telling, you 're much mistaken.

PFEIFER. [*Exclaims.*] We'll see about that! [*Rushes to the glass door and calls into the office.*] Mr. Dreissiger, Mr. Dreissiger, will you be good enough to come here?

[*Enter* DREISSIGER. *About forty, full-bodied, asthmatic. Looks severe.*]

DREISSIGER. What is it, Pfeifer?

PFEIFER [*spitefully*]. Becker says he won't be told to hold his tongue.

DREISSIGER. [*Draws himself up, throws back his head, stares at* BECKER; *his nostrils tremble.*] Oh, indeed!—Becker. [*To* PFEIFER.] Is he the man? . . .

[*The clerks nod.*]

BECKER [*insolently*]. Yes, Mr. Dreissiger, yes! [*Pointing to himself.*] This is the man. [*Pointing to* DREISSIGER.] And that's a man, too!

DREISSIGER [*angrily*]. Fellow, how dare you?

PFEIFER. He's too well off. He'll go dancing on the ice once too often, though.

BECKER [*recklessly*]. You shut up, you Jack-in-the-box. Your mother must have gone dancing once too often with Satan to have got such a devil for a son.

DREISSIGER. [*Now in a violent passion, roars.*] Hold your tongue this moment, sir, or . . .

[*He trembles and takes a few steps forward.*]

BECKER [*holding his ground steadily*]. I'm not deaf. My hearing's quite good yet.

DREISSIGER. [*Controls himself, asks in an apparently cool business tone.*] Was this fellow not one of the pack . . . ?

PFEIFER. He's a Bielau weaver. When there's any mischief going, they are sure to be in it.

DREISSIGER [*trembling*]. Well, I give you all warning: if the same thing happens again as last night—a troop of half-drunken cubs marching past my windows singing that low song . . .

BECKER. Is it "Bloody Justice" you mean?

DREISSIGER. You know well enough what I mean. I tell you that if I hear it again I 'll get hold of one of you, and—mind, I 'm not joking—before the justice he shall go. And if I can find out who it was that made up that vile doggerel . . .

BECKER. It 's a beautiful song, that 's what it is!

DREISSIGER. Another word and I send for the police on the spot, without more ado. I'll make short work with you young fellows. I 've got the better of very different men before now.

BECKER. I believe you there. A real thoroughbred manufacturer will get the better of two or three hundred weavers in the time it takes you to turn round—swallow them up, and not leave as much as a bone. He 's got four stomachs like a cow, and teeth like a wolf. That's nothing to him at all!

DREISSIGER. [*To his clerks.*] That man gets no more work from us.

BECKER. It's all the same to me whether I starve at my loom or by the roadside.

DREISSIGER. Out you go, then, this moment! . . .

BECKER [*determinedly*]. Not without my pay.

DREISSIGER. How much is owing to the fellow, Neumann?

NEUMANN. One and threepence.

DREISSIGER. [*Takes the money hurriedly out of the cashier's hand, and flings it on the table, so that some of the coins roll off on to the floor.*] There you are, then; and now, out of my sight with you!

BECKER. Not without my pay.

DREISSIGER. Do you not see it lying there? If you don't take it and go . . . It's exactly twelve now . . . The dyers are coming out for their dinner . . .

BECKER. I get my pay into my hand—here.

[*Points with the fingers of his right hand at the palm of his left.*]

DREISSIGER. [*To the* APPRENTICE.] Pick up the money, Tilgner.

[*The* APPRENTICE *lifts the money and puts it into* BECKER'S *hand.*]

BECKER. Everything in proper order.

[*Deliberately takes an old purse out of his pocket and puts the money into it.*]

DREISSIGER [*as* BECKER *still does not move away*]. Well? Do you want me to come and help you?

[*Signs of agitation are observable among the crowd of weavers. A long, loud sigh is heard, and then a fall.*

General interest is at once diverted to this new event.]

DREISSIGER. What's the matter there?

CHORUS OF WEAVERS AND WOMEN. "Some one's fainted." —"It's a little sickly boy."—"Is it a fit, or what?"

DREISSIGER. What do you say? Fainted?

[*He goes nearer.*]

OLD WEAVER. There he lies, any way.

[*They make room. A boy of about eight is seen lying on the floor as if dead.*]

DREISSIGER. Does any one know the boy?

OLD WEAVER. He's not from our village.

OLD BAUMERT. He's like one of Weaver Heinrich's boys. [*Looks at him more closely.*] Yes, that 's Heinrich's little Philip.

DREISSIGER. Where do they live?

OLD BAUMERT. Up near us in Kaschbach, sir. He goes round playin' music in the evenings, and all day he 's at the loom. They've nine children an' a tenth a-coming.

CHORUS OF WEAVERS AND WOMEN. "They 're terrible put to it."—"The rain comes through their roof."—"The woman hasn't two shirts among the nine."

OLD BAUMERT [*taking the boy by the arm*]. Now then, lad, what 's wrong with you? Wake up, lad.

DREISSIGER. Some of you help me, and we 'll get him up. It 's disgraceful to send a sickly child this distance. Bring some water, Pfeifer.

WOMAN [*helping to lift the boy*]. Surely you're not going to die, lad!

DREISSIGER. Brandy, Pfeifer, brandy will be better.

BECKER [*forgotten by all, has stood looking on. With his hand on the door-latch, he now calls loudly and tauntingly*]. Give him something to eat, an' he'll soon be all right.

[*Goes out.*]

DREISSIGER. That fellow will come to a bad end.—Take

him under the arm, Neumann. Easy now, easy; we'll get him into my room. What?

NEUMANN. He said something, Mr. Dreissiger. His lips are moving.

DREISSIGER. What—what is it, boy?

BOY. [*Whispers.*] I'm h—hungry.

WOMAN. I think he says . . .

DREISSIGER. We'll find out. Don't stop. Let us get him into my room. He can lie on the sofa there. We'll hear what the doctor says.

[DREISSIGER, NEUMANN, *and the woman lead the boy into the office. The weavers begin to behave like school-children when their master has left the classroom. They stretch themselves, whisper, move from one foot to the other, and in the course of a few moments are conversing loudly.*]

OLD BAUMERT. I believe as how Becker was right.

CHORUS OF WEAVERS AND WOMEN. "He did say something like that."—"It's nothing new here to fall down from hunger."—"God knows what's to come of them in winter if this cutting down of wages goes on."—"An' this winter the potatoes aren't no good at all."—"Things 'll get worse and worse till we're all done for together."

OLD BAUMERT. The best thing a man could do would be to put a rope around his neck and hang hisself on his own loom, like Weaver Nentwich. [*To another old weaver.*] Here, take a pinch. I was at Neurode yesterday. My brother-in-law, he works in the snuff factory there, and he give me a grain or two. Have you anything good in your handkerchief?

OLD WEAVER. Only a little pearl barley. I was coming along behind Ulbrich the miller's cart, and there was a slit in one of the sacks. I can tell you we'll be glad of it.

OLD BAUMERT. There's twenty-two mills in Peterswaldau, but of all they grind, there's never nothing comes our way.

OLD WEAVER. We must keep up heart. There's always something comes to help us on again.

HEIBER. Yes, when we're hungry, we can pray to all the saints to help us, and if that don't fill our bellies we can put a pebble in our mouths and suck it. Eh, Baumert?

[*Reënter* DREISSIGER, PFEIFER, AND NEUMANN.]

DREISSIGER. It was nothing serious. The boy is all right again. [*Walks about excitedly, panting.*] But all the same it's a disgrace. The child's so weak that a puff of wind would blow him over. How people, how any parents can be so thoughtless is what passes my comprehension. Loading him with two heavy pieces of fustian to carry good six miles! No one would believe it that hadn't seen it. It simply means that I shall have to make a rule that no goods brought by children will be taken over. [*He walks up and down silently for a few moments.*] I sincerely trust such a thing will not occur again.—Who gets all the blame for it? Why, of course the manufacturer. It's entirely our fault. If some poor little fellow sticks in the snow in winter and goes to sleep, a special correspondent arrives posthaste, and in two days we have a blood-curdling story served up in all the papers. Is any blame laid on the father, the parents, that send such a child?—Not a bit of it. How should they be to blame? It's all the manufacturer's fault—he's made the scapegoat. They flatter the weaver, and give the manufacturer nothing but abuse—he's a cruel man, with a heart like a stone, a wicked fellow, at whose calves every cur of a journalist may take a bite. He lives on the fat of the land, and pays the poor weavers starvation wages. In the flow of his eloquence the writer forgets to mention that such a man has his cares too and his sleepless nights; that he runs risks of which the workman never dreams; that he is often driven distracted by all the calculations he has to make, and all the different things he has to take into account; that he has to struggle for his very life against competition; and that no day passes without some annoyance or some loss. And think of the manufacturer's responsibilities, think of the numbers that depend on him, that look to him for their daily bread. No, No! none of you need wish yourselves in my shoes

—you would soon have enough of it. [*After a moment's reflection.*] You all saw how that fellow, that scoundrel Becker, behaved. Now he'll go and spread about all sorts of tales of my hard-heartedness, of how my weavers are turned off for a mere trifle, without a moment's notice. Is that true? Am I so very unmerciful?

CHORUS OF VOICES. No, sir.

DREISSIGER. It doesn't seem to me that I am. And yet these ne'er-do-wells come round singing low songs about us manufacturers—prating about hunger, with enough in their pockets to pay for quarts of bad brandy. If they would like to know what want is, let them go and ask the linen-weavers: they can tell something about it. But you here, you fustian-weavers, have every reason to thank God that things are no worse than they are. And I put it to all the old, industrious weavers present: Is a good workman able to gain a living in my employment, or is he not?

MANY VOICES. Yes, sir; he is, sir.

DREISSIGER. There now! You see! Of course such a fellow as that Becker can't. I advise you to keep these young lads in check. If there's much more of this sort of thing, I'll shut up shop—give up the business altogether, and then you can shift for yourselves, get work where you like—perhaps Mr. Becker will provide it.

FIRST WEAVER'S WIFE. [*Has come close to* DREISSIGER, *obsequiously removes a little dust from his coat.*] You've been an' rubbed ag'in' something, sir.

DREISSIGER. Business is as bad as it can be just now, you know that yourselves. Instead of making money, I am losing it every day. If, in spite of this, I take care that my weavers are kept in work, I look for some little gratitude from them. I have thousands of pieces of cloth in stock, and don't know if I'll ever be able to sell them. Well, now, I've heard how many weavers hereabouts are out of work, and—I'll leave Pfeifer to give the particulars—but this much I'll tell you, just to show you my good will. . . . I can't deal out charity all round; I'm not rich enough for that; but I can give the people

who are out of work the chance of earning at any rate a little. It's a great business risk I run by doing it, but that's my affair. I say to myself: Better that a man should work for a bite of bread than that he should starve altogether. Am I not right?

CHORUS OF VOICES. Yes, yes, sir.

DREISSIGER. And therefore I am ready to give employment to two hundred more weavers. Pfeifer will tell you on what conditions. [*He turns to go.*]

FIRST WEAVER'S WIFE. [*Comes between him and the door, speaks hurriedly, eagerly, imploringly.*] Oh, if you please, sir, will you let me ask you if you'll be so good . . . I've been twice laid up for . . .

DREISSIGER [*hastily*]. Speak to Pfeifer, good woman. I'm too late as it is. [*Passes on, leaving her standing.*]

REIMAN. [*Stops him again. In an injured, complaining tone.*] I have a complaint to make, if you please, sir. Mr. Feifer refuses to . . . I've always got one and two-pence for a web . . .

DREISSIGER. [*Interrupts him.*] Mr. Pfeifer's my manager. There he is. Apply to him.

HEIBER [*detaining* DREISSIGER; *hurriedly and confusedly*]. O sir, I wanted to ask if you would p'r'aps, if I might p'r'aps . . . if Mr. Feifer might . . . might . . .

DREISSIGER. What is it you want?

HEIBER. That advance pay I had last time, sir; I thought p'r'aps you would kindly . . .

DREISSIGER. I have no idea what you are talking about.

HEIBER. I'm awful hard up, sir, because . . .

DREISSIGER. These are things Pfeifer must look into—I really have not the time. Arrange the matter with Pfeifer.

[*He escapes into the office. The supplicants look helplessly at one another, sigh, and take their places again among the others.*]

PFEIFER [*resuming his task of inspection*]. Well, Annie, let us see what yours is like.

OLD BAUMERT. How much are we to get for the web, then, Mr. Pfeifer?

HEIBER. One shilling a web.

OLD BAUMERT. Has it come to that!

[*Excited whispering and murmuring among the weavers.*]

THE SECOND ACT

A small room in the house of WILHELM ANSORGE, *weaver and house-owner in the village of Kaschbach, in the Eulengebirge.*

In this room, which does not measure six feet from the dilapidated wooden floor to the smoke-blackened rafters, sit four people. Two young girls, EMMA *and* BERTHA BAUMERT, *are working at their looms;* MOTHER BAUMERT, *a decrepit old woman, sits on a stool beside the bed, with a winding-wheel in front of her; her idiot son* AUGUST *sits on a footstool, also winding. He is twenty, has a small body and head, and long, spider-like legs and arms.*

Faint, rosy evening light makes its way through two small windows in the right wall, which have their broken panes pasted over with paper or stuffed with straw. It lights up the flaxen hair of the girls, which falls loose on their slender white necks and thin bare shoulders, and their coarse chemises. These, with a short petticoat of the roughest linen, form their whole attire. The warm glow falls on the old woman's face, neck, and breast—a face worn away to a skeleton, with shriveled skin and sunken eyes, red and watery with smoke, dust, and working by lamplight; a long goître neck, wrinkled and sinewy; a hollow breast covered with faded, ragged shawls.

Part of the right wall is also lighted up, with stove, stove-bench, bedstead, and one or two gaudily colored sacred prints. On the stove rail rags are hanging to dry, and behind the stove

is a collection of worthless lumber. On the bench stand some old pots and cooking-utensils, and potato-parings are laid out on it, on paper, to dry. Hanks of yarn and reels hang from the rafters; baskets of bobbins stand beside the looms. In the back wall there is a low door without fastening. Beside it a bundle of willow wands is set up against the wall, and beyond them lie some damaged quarter-bushel baskets.

The room is full of sound—the rhythmic thud of the looms, shaking floor and walls, the click and rattle of the shuttles passing back and forward, and the steady whirr of the winding-wheels, like the hum of gigantic bees.

Mother Baumert [*in a querulous, feeble voice, as the girls stop weaving and bend over their webs*]. Got to make knots again already, have you?

Emma. [*The elder of the two girls, about twenty-two, tying a broken thread.*] It's the plaguyest web, this!

Bertha. [*Fifteen.*] Yes, it's real bad yarn they've given us this time.

Emma. What can have happened to father? He's been away since nine.

Mother Baumert. You may well ask. Where in the wide world can he be?

Bertha. Don't you worry yourself, mother.

Mother Baumert. I can't help it, Bertha lass. [Emma *begins to weave again.*]

Bertha. Stop a minute, Emma!

Emma. What is it!

Bertha. I thought I heard some one.

Emma. It'll be Ansorge coming home.

[*Enter* Fritz, *a little, barefooted, ragged boy of four.*]

Fritz [*whimpering*]. I'm hungry, mother.

Emma. Wait, Fritzel, wait a bit! Gran'-father will be here very soon, an' he's bringin' bread along with him, an' coffee, too.

Fritz. But I'm awful hungry, mother.

EMMA. Be a good boy now, Fritz. Listen to what I'm tellin' you. He'll be here this minute. He's bringin' nice bread an' nice corn-coffee; an' when we stop working mother'll take the tater peelin's and carry them to the farmer, and the farmer'll give her a drop o' good skim milk for her little boy.

FRITZ. Where's grandfather gone?

EMMA. To the manufacturer, Fritz, with a web.

FRITZ. To the manufacturer?

EMMA. Yes, yes, Fritz; down to Dreissiger's at Peterswaldau.

FRITZ. Is it there he gets the bread?

EMMA. Yes; Dreissiger gives him money, and then he buys the bread.

FRITZ. Does he give him a heap of money?

EMMA [*impatiently*]. Oh, stop that chatter, boy.

[*She and* BERTHA *go on weaving for a time, and then both stop again.*]

BERTHA. August, go and ask Ansorge if he'll give us a light.

[AUGUST *goes out accompanied by* FRITZ.]

MOTHER BAUMERT [*overcome by her childish apprehension, whimpers*]. Emma! Bertha! where can father be?

BERTHA. He'll have looked in to see Hauffen.

MOTHER BAUMERT [*crying*]. What if he's sittin' drinkin' in the public house?

EMMA. Don't cry, mother! You know well enough father's not the man to do that.

MOTHER BAUMERT [*half distracted by a multitude of gloomy forebodings*]. What . . . what . . . what's to become of us if he doesn't come home?—if he drinks the money, and brings us nothin' at all? There's not so much as a handful of salt in the house—not a bite o' bread, nor a bit o' wood for the fire.

BERTHA. Wait a bit, mother! It's moonlight just now.

We'll take August with us and go into the wood and get some sticks.

MOTHER BAUMERT. Yes, an' be caught by the forester.

[ANSORGE, *an old weaver of gigantic stature, who has to bend down to get into the room, puts his head and shoulders in at the door. Long, unkempt hair and beard.*]

ANSORGE. What's wanted?

BERTHA. Light, if you please.

ANSORGE [*in a muffled voice, as if speaking in a sick-room*]. There's good daylight yet.

MOTHER BAUMERT. Are we to sit in the dark next?

ANSORGE. I've to do the same myself. [*Goes out.*]

BERTHA. It's easy to see that he's a miser.

EMMA. Well, there's nothin' for it but to sit an' wait his pleasure.

[*Enter* MRS. HEINRICH, *a woman of thirty, enceinte; an expression of torturing anxiety and apprehension on her worn face.*]

MRS. HEINRICH. Good-evenin' t' you all.

MOTHER BAUMERT. Well, Jenny, and what's your news?

MRS. HEINRICH [*who limps*]. I've got a piece o' glass into my foot.

BERTHA. Come an' sit down, then, an' I'll see if I can get it out.

[MRS. HEINRICH *seats herself.* BERTHA *kneels down in front of her, and examines her foot.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT. How are you all at home, Jenny?

MRS. HEINRICH. [*Breaks out despairingly.*] Things is in a terrible way with us!

[*She struggles in vain against a rush of tears; then weeps silently.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT. The best thing as could happen to the likes of us, Jenny, would be if God had pity on us an' took us away out o' this weary world.

MRS. HEINRICH. [*No longer able to control herself, screams, still crying.*] My children's starvin'. [*Sobs and moans.*] I'm at my wits' ends. Let me work till I fall down—I'm more dead than alive—it's all no use. Am I able to fill nine hungry mouths? We got a bit o' bread last night, but it wasn't enough even for the two smallest ones. Who was I to give it to, eh? They all cried: Me, me, mother; give it to me! . . . An' if it's like this while I'm still on my feet, what'll it be when I've to take to bed? Our few taters was washed away. We haven't a thing to put in our mouths.

BERTHA. [*Has removed the bit of glass and washed the wound.*] We'll put a rag round it. Emma, see if you can find one.

MOTHER BAUMERT. We're no better off than you, Jenny.

MRS. HEINRICH. You have your girls, anyway. You've a husband as can work. Mine was taken with one of his fits last week again—so bad that I didn't know what to do with him, and was half out o' my mind with fright. And when he's had a turn like that, he can't stir out of bed under a week.

MOTHER BAUMERT. Mine's no better. His breathin' 's bad now as well as his back. An' there's not a farthin' nor a farthin's worth in the house. If he don't bring a few pence with him to-day, I don't know what we're to do.

EMMA. It's the truth she's tellin' you, Jenny. We had to let father take the little dog with him to-day, to have him killed, that we might get a bite into our stomachs again!

MRS. HEINRICH. Have you not got as much as a handful of flour to spare?

MOTHER BAUMERT. And that we have not, Jenny. There's not as much as a grain of salt in the house.

MRS. HEINRICH. Oh, whatever am I to do? [*Rises; stands still, brooding.*] I don't know what'll be the end of this! It's more nor I can bear. [*Screams in rage and despair.*] I would be contented if it was nothin' but pigs' food!—But I can't go home again empty-handed—that I can't. God forgive me, I see no other way out of it. [*She limps quickly out.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT. [*Calls after her in a warning voice.*] Jenny, Jenny! don't you be doin' anything foolish, now!

BERTHA. She'll do herself no harm, mother. You needn't be afraid.

EMMA. That's the way she always goes on.

[*Seats herself at the loom and weaves for a few seconds.*]

[AUGUST *enters, carrying a tallow candle, and lighting his father,* OLD BAUMERT, *who follows close behind him, staggering under a heavy bundle of yarn.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT. Oh, father, where have you been all this long time? Where have you been?

OLD BAUMERT. Come now, mother, don't fall on a man like that. Give me time to get my breath first. An' look who I've brought with me.

[MORITZ JAEGER *comes stooping in at the low door. Reserve soldier, newly discharged. Middle height, rosy-cheeked, military carriage. His cap on the side of his head, hussar fashion, whole clothes and shoes, a clean shirt without collar. Draws himself up and salutes.*]

JAEGER [*in a hearty voice*]. Good-evening, Annie Baumert!

MOTHER BAUMERT. Well, well, now! And to think you've got back! An' you've not forgotten us? Take a chair, then, lad.

EMMA [*wiping a wooden chair with her apron, and pushing it toward* MORITZ]. An' so you've come to see what poor folks are like again, Moritz?

JAEGER. I say, Emma, is it true that you've got a boy nearly old enough to be a soldier? Where did you get hold of him, eh?

[BERTHA, *having taken the small supply of provisions which her father has brought, puts meat into a saucepan, and shoves it into the oven, while* AUGUST *lights the fire.*]

BERTHA. You knew Weaver Finger, didn't you?

MOTHER BAUMERT. We had him here in the house with us. He was ready enough to marry her; but he was too far gone in consumption; he was as good as a dead man. It didn't happen for want of warning from me. But do you think she would listen? Not she. Now he's dead an' forgotten long ago, an' she's left with the boy to provide for as best she can. But now tell us how you've been gettin' on, Moritz.

OLD BAUMERT. You've only to look at him, mother, to know that. He's had luck. It'll be about as much as he can do to speak to the likes of us. He's got clothes like a prince, an' a silver watch, an' thirty shillings in his pocket into the bargain.

JAEGER [*stretching himself consequentially, a knowing smile on his face*]. I can't complain. I didn't get on at all badly in the regiment.

OLD BAUMERT. He was the major's own servant. Just listen to him—he speaks like a gentleman.

JAEGER. I've got so accustomed to it that I can't help it.

MOTHER BAUMERT. Well, now, to think that such a good-for-nothing as you were should have come to be a rich man. For there wasn't nothing to be made of you. You would never sit still to wind more than a hank of yarn at a time, that you wouldn't. Off you went to your tom-tit boxes an' your robin redbreast snares—they was all you cared about. Is it not the truth I'm telling?

JAEGER. Yes, yes, auntie, it's true enough. It wasn't only redbreasts. I went after swallows, too.

EMMA. Though we were always tellin' you that swallows were poison.

JAEGER. What did I care?—But how have you all been getting on, Auntie Baumert?

MOTHER BAUMERT. Oh, badly, lad, badly these last four years. I've had the rheumatics—just look at them hands. And it's more than likely as I've had a stroke o' some kind, too, I'm that helpless. I can hardly move a limb, an' nobody knows the pains I suffers.

Old Baumert. She's in a bad way, she is. She'll not hold out long.

Bertha. We've to dress her in the mornin' an' undress her at night, an' to feed her like a baby.

Mother Baumert [*speaking in a complaining, tearful voice*]. Not a thing can I do for myself. It's far worse than bein' ill. For it's not only a burden to myself I am, but to everyone else. Often and often do I pray to God to take me. For oh! mine's a weary life. I don't know . . . p'r'aps they think . . . but I'm one that's been a hard worker all my days. An' I've always been able to do my turn too; but now, all at once, [*she vainly attempts to rise*] I can't do nothing.—I've a good husband an' good children, but to have to sit here and see them . . . ! Look at the girls! There's hardly any blood left in them—faces the color of a sheet. But on they must work at these weary looms whether they earn enough to keep theirselves or not. What sort o' life is it they lead? Their feet never off the treadle from year's end to year's end. An' with it all they can't scrape together as much as 'll buy them clothes that they can let theirselves be seen in; never a step can they go to church, to hear a word of comfort. They're liker scarecrows than young girls of fifteen and twenty.

Bertha [*at the stove*]. It's beginnin' to smoke again!

Old Baumert. There now; look at that smoke. And we can't do nothin' for it. The whole stove's goin' to pieces. We must let it fall, and swallow the soot. We're coughin' already, one worse than the other. We may cough till we choke, or till we cough our lungs up—nobody cares.

Jaeger. But this here is Ansorge's business; he must see to the stove.

Bertha. He'll see us out of the house first; he has plenty against us without that.

Mother Baumert. We've only been in his way this long time past.

Old Baumert. One word of complaint an' out we go. He's had no rent from us this last half-year.

MOTHER BAUMERT. A well-off man like him needn't be so hard.

OLD BAUMERT. He's no better off than we are, mother. He's hard put to it, too, for all he holds his tongue about it.

MOTHER BAUMERT. He's got his house.

OLD BAUMERT. What are you talkin' about, mother? Not one stone in the wall is the man's own.

JAEGER. [*Has seated himself, and taken a short pipe with gay tassels out of one coat-pocket, and a quart bottle of brandy out of another.*] Things can't go on like this. I'm dumbfoundered when I see the life the people live here. The very dogs in the towns live better.

OLD BAUMERT [*eagerly*]. That's what I say! Eh? eh? You know it, too! But if you say that here, they'll tell you that it's only bad times.

[*Enter* ANSORGE, *an earthenware pan with soup in one hand, in the other a half-finished quarter-bushel basket.*]

ANSORGE. Glad to see you again, Moritz!

JAEGER. Thank you, Father Ansorge—same to you!

ANSORGE [*shoving his pan into the oven*]. Why, lad, you look like a duke!

OLD BAUMERT. Show him your watch, Moritz! An' he's got a new suit of clothes besides them he's on, an' thirty shillings in his purse.

ANSORGE [*shaking his head*]. Is that so? Well, well!

EMMA. [*Puts the potato-parings into a bag.*] I must be off; I'll maybe get a drop o' skim milk for these. [*Goes out.*]

JAEGER [*the others hanging on his words*]. You know how you all used to be down on me. It was always: Wait, Moritz, till your soldiering time comes—you'll catch it then. But you see how well I've got on. At the end of the first half-year I had got my good conduct stripes. You've got to be willing—that's where the secret lies. I brushed the sergeant's boots; I groomed his horse; I fetched his beer. I was as sharp as a needle. Always ready, accoutrements clean and shining—first at stables, first at roll-call, first in the saddle. And when

the bugle sounded to the assault—why, then, blood and thunder, and ride to the devil with you!! I was as keen as a pointer. Says I to myself: There's no help for it now, my boy, it's got to be done; and I set my mind to it and did it. Till at last the major said before the whole squadron: There's a hussar now that shows you what a hussar should be!

[*Silence. He lights his pipe.*]

Ansorge [*shaking his head*]. Well, well, well! You had luck with you, Moritz.

[*Sits down on the floor, with his willow twigs beside him, and continues mending the basket, which he holds between his legs.*]

Old Baumert. Let's hope you've brought some of it to us.—Are we to have a drop to drink your health in?

Jaeger. Of course you are, Father Baumert. And when this bottle's gone, we'll send for more.

[*He flings a coin on the table.*]

Ansorge [*open-mouthed with amazement*]. Oh, my! Oh, my! What goings on to be sure! Roast meat frizzlin' in the oven! A bottle o' brandy on the table! [*He drinks out of the bottle.*] Here's to you, Moritz!—Well, well, well!

[*The bottle circulates freely after this.*]

Old Baumert. If we could anyway have a bit o' meat on Sundays and holidays, instead of never seein' the sight of it from year's end to year's end! Now we'll have to wait till another poor little dog finds its way into the house like this one did four weeks gone by—an' that's not likely to happen soon again.

Ansorge. Have you killed the little dog?

Old Baumert. We had to do that or starve.

Ansorge. Well, well!

Mother Baumert. A nice, kind little beast he was, too!

Jaeger. Are you as keen as ever on roast dog hereabouts?

Old Baumert. My word, if we could only get enough of it!

Mother Baumert. A nice little bit o' meat like that does you a lot o' good.

OLD BAUMERT. Have you lost the taste for it, Moritz? Stay with us a bit, and it'll soon come back to you.

ANSORGE [*sniffing*]. Yes, yes! That will be a tasty bite—what a good smell it has!

OLD BAUMERT [*sniffing*]. Splendid!

ANSORGE. Come, then, Moritz, tell us your opinion, you that's been out and seen the world. Are things at all like improving for us, weavers, eh?

JAEGER. They would need to.

ANSORGE. We're in an awful state here. It's not livin' an' it's not dyin'. A man fights to the bitter end, but he's bound to be beat at last—to be left without a roof over his head, you may say without ground under his feet. As long as he can work at the loom he can earn some sort o' poor, miserable livin'. But it's many a day since I've been able to get that sort o' job. Now I tries to put a bite into my mouth with this here basket-makin'. I sits at it late into the night, and by the time I tumbles into bed I've earned three-halfpence. I put it to you if a man can live on that, when everything's so dear? Nine shillin' goes in one lump for house tax, three shillin' for land tax, nine shillin' for mortgage interest—that makes one pound one. I may reckon my year's earnin' at just double that money, and that leaves me twenty-one shillin' for a whole year's food, an' fire, an' clothes, an' shoes; and I've got to keep up some sort of a place to live in. Is it any wonder if I'm behindhand with my interest payments?

OLD BAUMERT. Some one would need to go to Berlin an' tell the King how hard put to it we are.

JAEGER. Little good that would do, Father Baumert. There's been plenty written about it in the newspapers. But the rich people, they can turn and twist things round . . . as cunning as the devil himself.

OLD BAUMERT [*shaking his head*]. To think they've no more sense than that in Berlin!

ANSORGE. And is it really true, Moritz? Is there no law to help us? If a man hasn't been able to scrape together enough to pay his mortgage interest, though he's worked the

very skin off his hands, must his house be taken from him? The peasant that's lent the money on it, he wants his rights—what else can you look for from him? But what's to be the end of it all, I don't know.—If I'm put out o' the house . . . [*In a voice choked by tears.*] I was born here, and here my father sat at his loom for more than forty years. Many was the time he said to mother: Mother, when I'm gone, the house 'll still be here. I've worked hard for it. Every nail means a night's weaving, every plank a year's dry bread. A man would think that . . .

JAEGER. They're quite fit to take the last bite out of your mouth—that's what they are.

ANSORGE. Well, well, well! I would rather be carried out than have to walk out now in my old days. Who minds dyin'? My father, he was glad to die. At the very end he got frightened, but I crept into bed beside him, an' he quieted down again. I was a lad of thirteen then. I was tired and fell asleep beside him—I knew no better—and when I woke he was quite cold.

MOTHER BAUMERT [*after a pause*]. Give Ansorge his soup out o' the oven, Bertha.

BERTHA. Here, Father Ansorge, it'll do you good.

ANSORGE [*eating and shedding tears*]. Well, well, well!

[OLD BAUMERT *has begun to eat the meat out of the saucepan.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT. Father, father, can't you have patience an' let Bertha serve it up properly?

OLD BAUMERT [*chewing*]. It's two years now since I took the sacrament. I went straight after that an' sold my Sunday coat, an' we bought a good bit o' pork, an' since then never a mouthful of meat has passed my lips till to-night.

JAEGER. How should *we* need meat? The manufacturers eat it for us. It's the fat of the land *they* live on. Whoever doesn't believe that has only to go down to Bielau and Peterswaldau. He'll see fine things there—palace upon palace, with towers and iron railings and plate-glass windows.

Who do they all belong to? Why, of course, the manufacturers! No signs of bad times there! Baked and boiled and fried—horses and carriages and governesses—they've money to pay for all that and goodness knows how much more. They're swelled out to bursting with pride and good living.

Ansorge. Things was different in my young days. Then the manufacturers let the weaver have his share. Now they keep everything to theirselves. An' would you like to know what's at the bottom of it all? It's that the fine folks nowadays believes neither in God nor devil. What do they care about commandments or punishments? And so they steal our last scrap o' bread, an' leave us no chance of earnin' the barest living. For it's their fault. If our manufacturers was good men, there would be no bad times for us.

Jaeger. Listen, then, and I'll read you something that will please you. [*He takes one or two loose papers from his pocket.*] I say, August, run and fetch another quart from the public-house. Eh, boy, do you laugh all day long?

Mother Baumert. No one knows why, but our August's always happy—grins an' laughs, come what may. Off with you, then, quick! [*Exit* August *with the empty brandy-bottle.*] You've got something good now, eh, father?

Old Baumert [*still chewing; spirits rising from the effect of food and drink*]. Moritz, you're the very man we want. You can read an' write. You understand the weavin' trade, and you've a heart to feel for the poor weavers' sufferin's. You should stand up for us here.

Jaeger. I'd do that quick enough! There's nothing I'd like better than to give the manufacturers round here a bit of a fright—dogs that they are! I'm an easy-going fellow, but let me once get worked up into a real rage, and I'll take Dreissiger in the one hand and Dittrich in the other, and knock their heads together till the sparks fly out of their eyes.—If we could only arrange all to join together, we'd soon give the manufacturers a proper lesson . . . without help from King or Government . . . all we'd have to do would be to say, We want this and that, and we don't want the other

thing. There would be a change of days then. As soon as they see that there's some pluck in us, they'll cave in. I know the rascals; they're a pack of cowardly hounds.

Mother Baumert. There's some truth in what you say. I'm not an ill-natured woman. I've always been the one to say as how there must be rich folks as well as poor. But when things come to such a pass as this . . .

Jaeger. The devil may take them all, for what I care. It would be no more than they deserve.

[Old Baumert *has quietly gone out.*]

Bertha. Where's father?

Mother Baumert. I don't know where he can have gone.

Bertha. Do you think he's not been able to stomach the meat, with not gettin' none for so long?

Mother Baumert [*in distress, crying*]. There, now, there! He's not even able to keep it down when he's got it. Up it comes again, the only bite o' good food as he's tasted this many a day.

[*Reënter* Old Baumert, *crying with rage.*]

Old Baumert. It's no good! I'm too far gone! Now that I've at last got hold of somethin' with a taste in it, my stomach won't keep it.

[*He sits down on the bench by the stove crying.*]

Jaeger [*with a sudden violent ebullition of rage*]. And yet there are people not far from here, justices they call themselves too, over-fed brutes, that have nothing to do all the year round but invent new ways of wasting their time. And these people say that the weavers would be quite well off if only they weren't so lazy.

Ansorge. The men as say that are no men at all, they're monsters.

Jaeger. Never mind, Father Ansorge; we're making the place hot for 'em. Becker and I have been and given Dreissiger a piece of our mind, and before we came away we sang him "Bloody Justice."

ANSORGE. Good Lord! Is that the song?
JAEGER. Yes; I have it here.
ANSORGE. They call it Dreissiger's song, don't they?
JAEGER. I'll read it to you.
MOTHER BAUMERT. Who wrote it?
JAEGER. That's what nobody knows. Now listen.

[*He reads, hesitating like a schoolboy, with incorrect accentuation, but unmistakably strong feeling. Despair, suffering, rage, hatred, thirst for revenge, all find utterance.*]

The justice to us weavers dealt
Is bloody, cruel, and hateful
Our life's one torture, long drawn out:
For Lynch law we'd be grateful.

Stretched on the rack day after day,
Hearts sick and bodies aching,
Our heavy sighs their witness bear
To spirits slowly breaking.

[*The words of the song make a strong impression on* OLD BAUMERT. *Deeply agitated, he struggles against the temptation to interrupt* JAEGER. *At last he can keep quiet no longer.*]

OLD BAUMERT. [*To his wife, half laughing, half crying, stammering.*] Stretched on the rack day after day. Whoever wrote that, mother, wrote the truth. You can bear witness . . . eh, how does it go? "Our heavy sighs their witness bear" . . . what's the rest?
JAEGER. "To spirits slowly breaking."
OLD BAUMERT. You know the way we sigh, mother, day and night, sleepin' and wakin'.

[ANSORGE *has stopped working, and cowers on the floor, strongly agitated.* MOTHER BAUMERT *and* BERTHA *wipe their eyes frequently during the course of the reading.*]

JAEGER. [*Continues to read.*]

The Dreissigers true hangmen are,
Servants no whit behind them;
Masters and men with one accord
Set on the poor to grind them.
You villains all, you brood of hell . . .

OLD BAUMERT [*trembling with rage, stamping on the floor*]. Yes, brood of hell!!!

JAEGER. [*Reads.*]

You fiends in fashion human,
A curse will fall on all like you,
Who prey on man and woman.

ANSORGE. Yes, yes, a curse upon them!

OLD BAUMERT [*clenching his fist threateningly*]. You prey on man and woman.

JAEGER. [*Reads.*]

The suppliant knows he asks in vain,
Vain every word that's spoken.
"If not content, then go and starve—
Our rules cannot be broken."

OLD BAUMERT. What is it? "The suppliant knows he asks in vain"? Every word of it's true . . . every word . . . as true as the Bible. He knows he asks in vain.

ANSORGE. Yes, yes! It's all no good.

JAEGER. [*Reads.*]

Then think of all our woe and want,
O ye who hear this ditty!
Our struggle vain for daily bread
Hard hearts would move to pity.
But pity's what *you've* never known,—
You'd take both skin and clothing,
You cannibals, whose cruel deeds
Fill all good men with loathing.

OLD BAUMERT. [*Jumps up, beside himself with excitement.*] Both skin and clothing. It's true, it's all true! Here I stand, Robert Baumert, master-weaver of Kaschbach. Who can bring up anything against me? I've been an honest, hard-working man all my life long, an' look at me now! What have I to show for it? Look at me! See what they've made of me!

Stretched on the rack day after day. [*He holds out his arms.*] Feel that! Skin and bone! "You villains all, you brood of hell!!"

[*He sinks down on a chair, weeping with rage and despair.*]

ANSORGE. [*Flings his basket from him into a corner, rises, his whole body trembling with rage, gasps.*] And the time's come now for a change, I say. We'll stand it no longer! We'll stand it no longer! Come what may!

THE THIRD ACT

The common room of the principal public-house in Peterswaldau. A large room with a raftered roof supported by a central wooden pillar, round which a table runs. In the back wall, a little to the right of the pillar, is the entrance door, through the opening of which the spacious lobby or outer room is seen, with barrels and brewing utensils. To the right of this door, in the corner, is the bar—a high wooden counter with receptacles for beer-mugs, glasses, etc.; a cupboard with rows of brandy and liquor bottles on the wall behind, and between counter and cupboard a narrow space for the barkeeper. In front of the bar stands a table with a gay-colored cover, a pretty lamp hanging above it, and several cane chairs placed around it. Not far off, in the right wall, is a door with the inscription: Bar Parlor. Nearer the front on the same side an old eight-day clock stands ticking. At the back, to the left of the entrance door, is a table with bottles and glasses, and beyond this, in the corner, is the great store. In the left wall there are three small windows. Below them runs a long bench; and in front of each stands a large oblong wooden table, with the end towards the wall. There are benches with backs along the sides of these tables, and at the end of each facing the window stands a wooden chair. The walls are washed blue and decorated with advertisements, colored prints

and oleographs, among the latter a portrait of Frederick William III.

WELZEL, *the publican, a good-natured giant, upwards of fifty, stands behind the counter, letting beer run from a barrel into a glass.*

MRS. WELZEL *is ironing by the stove. She is a handsome, tidily dressed woman in her thirty-fifth year.*

ANNA WELZEL, *a good-looking girl of seventeen, with a quantity of beautiful, fair, reddish hair, sits, nicely dressed, with her embroidery, at the table with the colored cover. She looks up from her work for a moment and listens, as the sound of a funeral hymn sung by school-children is heard in the distance.*

WIEGAND, *the joiner, in his working clothes, is sitting at the same table, with a glass of Bavarian beer before him. His face shows that he understands what the world requires of a man if he is to attain his ends—namely, craftiness, sharpness, and relentless determination.*

A COMMERCIAL TRAVELER *is seated at the pillar-table, vigorously masticating a beefsteak. He is of middle height, stout and thriving-looking, inclined to jocosity, lively, and impudent. He is dressed in the fashion of the day, and his portmanteau, pattern-case, umbrella, overcoat, and traveling-rug lie on chairs beside him.*

WELZEL [*carrying a glass of beer to the* TRAVELER, *but addressing* WIEGAND]. The devil's loose in Peterswaldau today.

WIEGAND [*in a sharp, shrill voice*]. That's because it's delivery day at Dreissiger's.

MRS. WELZEL. But they don't generally make such an awful row.

WIEGAND. It's maybe because of the two hundred new weavers that he's going to take on.

MRS. WELZEL [*at her ironing*]. Yes, yes, that'll be it. If he wants two hundred, six hundred's sure to have come. There's no lack of *them.*

WIEGAND. You may well say that. There's no fear of their dying out, let them be ever so badly off. They bring more children into the world than we know what to do with. [*The strains of the funeral hymn are suddenly heard more distinctly.*] There's a funeral to-day, too. Weaver Nentwich is dead, as no doubt you know.

WELZEL. He's been long enough about it. He's been goin' about like a livin' ghost this many a long day.

WIEGAND. You never saw such a little coffin, Welzel; it was the tiniest, miserablest little thing I ever glued together. And what a corpse! It didn't weigh ninety pounds.

TRAVELER. [*His mouth full.*] What I don't understand's this . . . Take up whatever paper you like and you'll find the most heartrending accounts of the destitution among the weavers. You get the impression that three-quarters of the people in this neighborhood are starving. Then you come and see a funeral like what's going on just now. I met it as I came into the village. Brass band, schoolmaster, school-children, pastor, and such a procession behind them that you would think it was the Emperor of China that was getting buried. If the people have money to spend on this sort of thing, well . . . ! [*He takes a drink of beer; puts down the glass; suddenly and jocosely.*] What do you say to it, Miss? Don't you agree with me?

[ANNA *gives an embarrassed laugh, and goes on working busily.*]

TRAVELER. Now, I'll take a bet that these are slippers for papa.

WELZEL. You're wrong, then; I wouldn't put such things on my feet.

TRAVELER. You don't say so! Now, I would give half of what I'm worth if these slippers were for me.

MRS. WELZEL. Oh, you don't know nothing about such things.

WIEGAND. [*Has coughed once or twice, moved his chair, and prepared himself to speak.*] You were saying, sir, that

you wondered to see such a funeral as this. I tell you, and Mrs. Welzel here will bear me out, that it's quite a small funeral.

TRAVELER. But, my good man . . . what a monstrous lot of money it must cost! Where does that all come from?

WIEGAND. If you'll excuse me for saying so, sir, there's a deal of foolishness among the poorer working-people hereabouts. They have a kind of inordinate idea, if I may say so, of the respect an' duty an' honor they're bound to show to such as are taken from their midst. And when it comes to be a case of parents, then there's no bounds whatever to their superstitiousness. The children and the nearest family scrapes together every farthing they can call their own, an' what's still wanting, that they borrow from some rich man. They run themselves into debt over head and ears; they're owing money to the pastor, to the sexton, and to all concerned. Then there's the victuals an' the drink, an' such like. No, sir, I'm far from speaking against dutifulness to parents; but it's too much when it goes the length of the mourners having to bear the weight of it for the rest of their lives.

TRAVELER. But surely the pastor might reason them out of such foolishness.

WIEGAND. Begging your pardon, sir, but I must mention that every little place hereabouts has its church an' its respected pastor to support. These honorable gentlemen has their advantages from big funerals. The larger the attendance is, the larger the offertory is bound to be. Whoever knows the circumstances connected with the working classes here, sir, will assure you that the pastors are strong against quiet funerals.

[*Enter* HORNIG, *the rag-dealer, a little bandy-legged old man, with a strap round his chest.*]

HORNIG. Good-mornin', ladies and gentlemen! A glass of schnapps, if you please, Mr. Welzel. Has the young mistress anything for me to-day? I've got beautiful ribbons in my cart, Miss Anna, an' tapes, an' garters, an' the very best of

pins an' hairpins an' hooks an' eyes. An' all in exchange for a few rags. [*He changes his voice.*] An' out of them rags fine white paper's to be made, for your sweetheart to write you a letter on.

ANNA. Thank you, but I've nothing to do with sweethearts.

MRS. WELZEL [*putting a bolt into her iron*]. No, she's not that kind. She'll not hear of marrying.

TRAVELER. [*Jumps up, affecting delighted surprise, goes forward to* ANNA'S *table, and holds out his hand to her across it.*] That's right, miss. You and I think alike in this matter. Give me your hand on it. We'll both remain single.

ANNA [*blushing scarlet, gives him her hand*]. But you are married already!

TRAVELER. Not a bit of it. I only pretend to be. You think so because I wear a ring. I only have it on my finger to protect my charms against shameless attacks. I'm not afraid of you, though. [*He puts the ring into his pocket.*] But tell me, truly, miss, are you quite determined never, never, never, to marry?

ANNA. [*Shakes her head.*] Oh, get along with you!

MRS. WELZEL. You may trust her to remain single unless something very extra good turns up.

TRAVELER. And why should it not? I know of a rich Silesian proprietor who married his mother's lady's maid. And there's Dreissiger, the rich manufacturer, his wife is an innkeeper's daughter too, and not half so pretty as you, miss, though she rides in her carriage now, with servants in livery. And why not? [*He marches about, stretching himself, and stamping his feet.*] Let me have a cup of coffee, please.

[*Enter* ANSORGE *and* OLD BAUMERT, *each with a bundle. They seat themselves meekly and silently beside* HORNIG, *at the front table to the left.*]

WELZEL. How are you, Father Ansorge? Glad to see you once again.

HORNIG. Yes, it's not often as you crawl down from that smoky old nest.

ANSORGE [*visibly embarrassed, mumbles*]. I've been fetchin' myself a web again.

BAUMERT. He's goin' to work at a shilling the web.

ANSORGE. I wouldn't have done it, but there's no more to be made now by basket-weavin'.

WIEGAND. It's always better than nothing. He does it only to give you employment. I know Dreissiger very well. When I was up there taking out his double windows last week we were talking about it, him and me. It's out of pity that he does it.

ANSORGE. Well, well, well! That may be so.

WELZEL [*setting a glass of schnapps on the table before each of the weavers*]. Here you are, then. I say, Ansorge, how long is it since you had a shave? The gentleman over there would like to know.

TRAVELER. [*Calls across.*] Now, Mr. Welzel, you know I didn't say that. I was only struck by the venerable appearance of the master-weaver. It isn't often one sees such a gigantic figure.

ANSORGE [*scratching his head, embarrassed*]. Well, well!

TRAVELER. Such specimens of primitive strength are rare nowadays. We're all rubbed smooth by civilization . . . but I can still take pleasure in nature untampered with. . . . These bushy eyebrows! That tangled length of beard!

HORNIG. Let me tell you, sir, that these people haven't the money to pay a barber, and as to a razor for themselves, that's altogether beyond them. What grows, grows. They haven't nothing to throw away on their outsides.

TRAVELER. My good friend, you surely don't imagine that I would . . . [*Aside to* WELZEL.] Do you think I might offer the hairy one a glass of beer?

WELZEL. No, no; you mustn't do that. He wouldn't take it. He's got some queer ideas in that head of his.

TRAVELER. All right, then, I won't. With your permission, miss. [*He seats himself at* ANNA'S *table.*] I declare, miss,

that I've not been able to take my eyes off your hair since I came in—such glossy softness, such a splendid quantity! [*Ecstatically kisses his finger-tips.*] And what a color! . . . like ripe wheat. Come to Berlin with that hair and you'll create no end of a sensation. On my honor, with hair like that you may go to Court. . . . [*Leans back, looking at it.*] Glorious, simply glorious!

WIEGAND. They've given her a name because of it.

TRAVELER. And what may that be?

HORNIG. The chestnut filly, isn't it?

WELZEL. Come, now, we've had enough o' this. I'm not goin' to have the girl's head turned altogether. She's had a-planty of silly notions put into it already. She'll hear of nothing under a count to-day, and to-morrow it'll be a prince.

MRS. WELZEL. You let her alone, father. There's no harm in wantin' to rise in the world. It's as well that people don't all think as you do, or nobody would get on at all. If Dreissiger's grandfather had been of your way of thinkin', they would be poor weavers still. And now they're rollin' in wealth. An' look at old Tromtra. He was nothing but a weaver, too, and now he owns twelve estates, an' he's been made a nobleman into the bargain.

WIEGAND. Yes, Welzel, you must look at the thing fairly. Your wife's in the right this time. I can answer for that. I'd never be where I am, with seven workmen under me, if I had thought like you.

HORNIG. Yes, you understand the way to get on; that your worst enemy must allow. Before the weaver has taken to bed, you're gettin' his coffin ready.

WIEGAND. A man must attend to his business if he's to make anything of it.

HORNIG. No fear of you for that. You know before the doctor when death's on the way to knock at a weaver's door.

WIEGAND [*attempting to laugh, suddenly furious*]. And you know better than the police where the thieves are among the weavers, that keep back two or three bobbins full every

week. It's rags you ask for, but you don't say No, if there's a little yarn among them.

HORNIG. An' your corn grows in the churchyard. The more that are bedded on the sawdust, the better for you. When you see the rows of little children's graves, you pats yourself on the belly, and says you: This has been a good year; the little brats have fallen like cockchafers off the trees. I can allow myself a quart extra in the week again.

WIEGAND. And supposing this is all true, it still doesn't make me a receiver of stolen goods.

HORNIG. No; perhaps the worst you do is to send in an account twice to the rich fustian manufacturers, or to help yourself to a plank or two at Dreissiger's when there's building goin' on and the moon happens not to be shinin'.

WIEGAND [*turning his back*]. Talk to any one you like, but not to me. [*Then suddenly.*] Hornig the liar!

HORNIG. Wiegand the coffin-jobber!

WIEGAND. [*To the rest of the company.*] He knows charms for bewitching cattle.

HORNIG. If you don't look out, I'll try one of 'em on you. [WIEGAND *turns pale.*]

MRS. WELZEL. [*Had gone out; now returns with the* TRAVELER'S *coffee; in the act of putting it on the table.*] Perhaps you would rather have it in the parlor, sir?

TRAVELER. Most certainly not! [*With a languishing look at* ANNA.] I could sit here till I die.

[*Enter a* YOUNG FORESTER *and a* PEASANT, *the latter carrying a whip. They wish the others "Good-Morning," and remain standing at the counter.*]

PEASANT. Two brandies, if you please.

WELZEL. Good-morning to you, gentlemen.

[*He pours out their beverage; the two touch glasses, take a mouthful, and then set the glasses down on the counter.*]

TRAVELER. [*To* FORESTER.] Come far this morning, sir?

FORESTER. From Steinseiffersdorf—that's a good step.

[*Two old* WEAVERS *enter, and seat themselves beside* ANSORGE, BAUMERT *and* HORNIG.]

TRAVELER. Excuse me asking, but are you in Count Hochheim's service?

FORESTER. No. I'm in Count Keil's.

TRAVELER. Yes, yes, of course—that was what I meant. One gets confused here among all the counts and barons and other gentlemen. It would take a giant's memory to remember them all. Why do you carry an axe, if I may ask?

FORESTER. I've just taken this one from a man who was stealing wood.

OLD BAUMERT. Yes, their lordships are mighty strict with us about a few sticks for the fire.

TRAVELER. You must allow that if every one were to help himself to what he wanted . . .

OLD BAUMERT. By your leave, sir, but there's a difference made here as elsewhere between the big an' the little thieves, There's some here as deals in stolen wood wholesale, and grows rich on it. But if a poor weaver . . .

FIRST OLD WEAVER. [*Interrupts* BAUMERT.] We're forbid to take a single branch; but their lordships, they take the very skin off of us—we've assurance money to pay, an' spinning-money, an' charges in kind—we must go here an' go there, an' do so an' so much field work, all willy-nilly.

ANSORGE. That's just how it is—what the manufacturer leaves us, their lordships takes from us.

SECOND OLD WEAVER. [*Has taken a seat at the next table.*] I've said it to his lordship himself. By your leave, my lord, says I, it's not possible for me to work on the estate so many days this year. For why—my own bit of ground, my lord, it's been next to carried away by the rains. I've to work both night and day if I'm to live at all. For oh, what a flood that was! . . . There I stood an' wrung my hands, an' watched the good soil come pourin' down the hill, into the very house! And all that dear, fine seed! . . . I could do nothing but roar an' cry until I couldn't see out o' my eyes for a week. And then I had to start an' wheel eighty heavy

barrow-loads of earth up that hill, till my back was all but broken.

PEASANT [*roughly*]. You weavers here make such an awful outcry. As if we hadn't all to put up with what Heaven sends us. An' if you *are* badly off just now, whose fault is it but your own? What did you do when trade was good? Drank an' squandered all you made. If you had saved a bit then, you'd have it to fall back on now when times is bad, and not need to be goin' stealin' yarn and wood.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER [*standing with several comrades in the lobby or outer room, calls in at the door*]. What's a peasant but a peasant, though he lies in bed till nine?

FIRST OLD WEAVER. The peasant an' the count, it's the same story with 'em both. Says the peasant when a weaver wants a house: I'll give you a little bit of a hole to live in, an' you'll pay me so much rent in money, an' the rest of it you'll make up by helpin' me to get in my hay an' my corn—an' if that doesn't please you, why, then you may go elsewhere. He tries another, and the second he says the same as the first.

BAUMERT [*angrily*]. The weaver's like a bone that every dog takes a gnaw at.

PEASANT [*furious*]. You starving curs, you're no good for anything. Can you yoke a plough? Can you draw a straight furrow or throw a bundle of sheaves on to a cart. You're fit for nothing but to idle about an' go after the women. A pack of scoundrelly ne'er-do-wells!

[*He has paid and now goes out. The* FORESTER *follows, laughing.* WELZEL, *the joiner, and* MRS. WELZEL *laugh aloud; the* TRAVELER *laughs to himself. Then there is a moment's silence.*]

HORNIG. A peasant like that's as stupid as his own ox. As if I didn't know all about the distress in the villages round here. Sad sights I've seen! Four and five lyin' naked on one sack of straw.

TRAVELER [*in a mildly remonstrative tone*]. Allow me to remark, my good man, that there's a great difference of opinion as to the amount of distress here in the Eulengebirge. If you can read . . .

HORNIG. I can read straight off, as well as you. An' I know what I've seen with my own eyes. It would be queer if a man that's traveled the country with a pack on his back these forty years an' more didn't know something about it. There was Fullern, now. You saw the children scraping about among the dung-heaps with the peasants' geese. The people up there died naked, on the bare stone floors. In their sore need they ate the stinking weavers' glue. Hunger carried them off by the hundred.

TRAVELER. You must be aware, since you are able to read, that strict investigation has been made by the Government, and that . . .

HORNIG. Yes, yes, we all know what that means. They send a gentleman that knows all about it already better nor if he had seen it, an' he goes about a bit in the village, at the lower end, where the best houses are. He doesn't want to dirty his shining boots. Thinks he to himself: All the rest'll be the same as this. An' so he steps into his carriage, an' drives away home again an' then writes to Berlin that there's no distress in the place at all. If he had but taken the trouble to go higher up into a village like that, to where the stream comes in, or across the stream on to the narrow side—or, better still, if he'd gone up to the little out-o'-the-way hovels on the hill above, some of 'em that black an' tumble-down as it would be the waste of a good match to set fire to 'em—it's another kind of report he'd have sent to Berlin. They should have come to me, these government gentlemen that wouldn't believe there was no distress here. I would have shown them something. I'd have opened their eyes for 'em in some of these starvation holes.

[*The strains of the Weavers' Song are heard, sung outside.*]

WELZEL. There they are, roaring at that devil's song again.
WIEGAND. They're turning the whole place upside down.
MRS. WELZEL. You'd think there was something in the air.

[JAEGER *and* BECKER *arm in arm, at the head of a troop of young weavers, march nosily through the outer room and enter the bar.*]

JAEGER. Halt! To your places!

[*The new arrivals sit down at the various tables, and begin to talk to other weavers already seated there.*]

HORNIG. [*Calls out to* BECKER.] What's up now, Becker, that you've got together a crowd like this?

BECKER [*significantly*]. Who knows but something may be going to happen? Eh, Moritz?

HORNIG. Come, come, lads. Don't you be a-gettin' of yourselves into mischief.

BECKER. Blood's flowed already. Would you like to see it?

[*He pulls up his sleeve and shows bleeding tattoo-marks on the upper part of his arm. Many of the other young weavers do the same.*]

BECKER. We've been at Father Schmidt's gettin' ourselves vaccinated.

HORNIG. Now the thing's explained. Little wonder there's such an uproar in the place, with a band of young rapscallions like you paradin' round.

JAEGER [*consequentially, in a loud voice*]. You may bring two quarts at once, Welzel! I pay. Perhaps you think I haven't got the needful. You're wrong, then. If we wanted we could sit an' drink your best brandy an' swill coffee till to-morrow morning with any bagman in the land.

[*Laughter among the young weavers.*]

TRAVELER [*affecting comic surprise*]. Is the young gentleman kind enough to take notice of me?

[*Host, hostess, and their daughter,* WIEGAND, *and the* TRAVELER *all laugh.*]

JAEGER. If the cap fits wear it.

TRAVELER. Your affairs seem to be in a thriving condition, young man, if I may be allowed to say so.

JAEGER. I can't complain. I'm a traveler in made-up goods. I go shares with the manufacturers. The nearer starvation the weaver is, the better I fare. His want butters my bread.

BECKER. Well done, Moritz! You gave it to him that time. Here's to you!

[WELZEL *has brought the corn-brandy. On his way back to the counter he stops, turns round slowly, and stands, an embodiment of phlegmatic strength, facing the weavers.*]

WELZEL. [*calmly but emphatically*]. You let the gentleman alone. He's done you no harm.

YOUNG WEAVERS. And we're doing him no harm.

[MRS. WELZEL *has exchanged a few words with the* TRAVELER. *She takes the cup with the remains of his coffee and carries it into the parlor. The* TRAVELER *follows her amidst the laughter of the weavers.*]

YOUNG WEAVERS [*singing*].

"The Dreissigers the hangmen are,
Servants no whit behind them."

WELZEL. Hush-sh! Sing that song anywhere else you like, but not in my house.

FIRST OLD WEAVER. He's quite right. Stop that singin', lads.

BECKER. [*Roars.*] But we must march past Dreissiger's, boys, and let them hear it once more.

WIEGAND. You'd better take care—you may march once too often. [*Laughter and cries of Ho, ho!*]

[WITTIG *has entered; a gray-haired old smith, bareheaded, with leather apron and wooden shoes, sooty from the smithy. He is standing at the counter waiting for his schnapps.*]

YOUNG WEAVER. Wittig, Wittig!

WITTIG. Here he is. What do you want with him?

YOUNG WEAVERS. "It's Wittig!"—"Wittig, Wittig!"—"Come here, Wittig."—"Sit beside us, Wittig."

WITTIG. Do you think I would sit beside a set of rascals like you?

JAEGER. Come and take a glass with us.

WITTIG. Keep your brandy to yourselves. I pay for my own drink. [*Takes his glass and sits down beside* BAUMERT *and* ANSORGE. [*Clapping the latter on the stomach.*] What's the weavers' food so nice? Sauerkraut and roasted lice!

OLD BAUMERT [*excitedly*]. But what would you say now if they'd made up their minds as how they would put up with it no longer.

WITTIG [*with pretended astonishment, staring open-mouthed at the old weaver*]. Heinerle! you don't mean to tell me that that's you? [*Laughs immoderately.*] O Lord, O Lord! I could laugh myself to death. Old Baumert risin' in rebellion! We'll have the tailors at it next, and then there'll be a rebellion among the baa-lambs, and the rats and the mice. Damn it all, but we'll see some sport.

[*He nearly splits with laughter.*]

OLD BAUMERT. You needn't go on like that, Wittig. I'm the same man I've always been. I still say 'twould be better if things could be put right peaceably.

WITTIG. Peaceably! How could it be done peaceably? Did they do it peaceably in France? Did Robespeer tickle the rich men's palms? No! It was: Away with them, every one! To the gilyoteen with them! Allongs enfong! You've got your work before you. The geese'll not fly ready roasted into your mouths.

OLD BAUMERT. If I could make even half a livin'—

FIRST OLD WEAVER. The water's up to our chins now, Wittig.

SECOND OLD WEAVER. We're afraid to go home. It's all the same whether we works or whether we lies abed; it's starvation both ways.

First Old Weaver. A man's like to go mad at home.

Old Ansorge. It's that length with me now that I don't care how things go.

Old Weavers [*with increasing excitement*]. "We've no peace anywhere."—"We've no spirit left to work."—"Up with us in Steenkunzendorf you can see a weaver sittin' by the stream washin' hisself the whole day long, naked as God made him. It's driven him clean out of his mind."

Third Old Weaver [*moved by the spirit, stands up and begins to "speak with tongues," stretching out his hand threateningly*]. Judgment is at hand! Have no dealings with the rich and the great! Judgment is at hand! The Lord God of Sabaoth . . .

[*Some of the weavers laugh. He is pulled down on to his seat.*]

Welzel. That's a chap that can't stand a single glass—he gets wild at once.

Third Old Weaver. [*Jumps up again.*] But they—they believe not in God, not in hell, not in heaven. They mock at religion . . .

First Old Weaver. Come, come now, that's enough!

Becker. You let him do his little bit o' preaching. There's many a one would be the better for taking it to heart.

Voices [*in excited confusion*]. "Let him alone!"—"Let him speak!"

Third Old Weaver [*raising his voice*]. But hell is opened, saith the Lord; its jaws are gaping wide, to swallow up all those that oppress the afflicted and pervert judgment in the cause of the poor. [*Wild excitement.*]

Third Old Weaver [*suddenly declaiming schoolboy fashion*].

When one has thought upon it well,
It's still more difficult to tell
Why they the linen-weaver's work despise.

Becker. But we're fustian-weavers, man. [*Laughter.*]

Hornig. The linen-weavers is ever so much worse off than

you. They're wandering about among the hills like ghosts. You people here have still got the pluck left in you to kick up a row.

WITTIG. Do you suppose the worst's over here? It won't be long till the manufacturers drain away that little bit of strength they still have left in their bodies.

BECKER. You know what he said: It will come to the weavers working for a bite of bread. [*Uproar.*]

SEVERAL OLD AND YOUNG WEAVERS. Who said that?

BECKER. Dreissiger said it.

A YOUNG WEAVER. The damned rascal should be hung up by the heels.

JAEGER. Look here, Wittig. You've always jawed such a lot about the French Revolution, and a good deal too about your own doings. A time may be coming, and that before long, when every one will have a chance to show whether he's a braggart or a true man.

WITTIG [*flaring up angrily*]. Say another word if you dare! Have you heard the whistle of bullets? Have you done outpost duty in an enemy's country?

JAEGER. You needn't get angry about it. We're comrades. I meant no harm.

WITTIG. None of your comradeship for me, you impudent young fool.

[*Enter* KUTSCHE, *the policeman.*]

SEVERAL VOICES. Hush—sh! Police!

[*This calling goes on for some time, till at last there is complete silence, amidst which* KUTSCHE *takes his place at the central pillar-table.*]

KUTSCHE. A small brandy, please.

[*Again complete silence.*]

WITTIG. I suppose you've come to see if we're all behaving ourselves, Kutsche?

KUTSCHE [*paying no attention to* WITTIG]. Good-morning, Mr. Wiegand.

WIEGAND [*still in the corner in front of the counter*]. Good-morning t' you, sir.

KUTSCHE. How's trade?

WIEGAND. Thank you, much as usual.

BECKER. The chief constable's sent him to see if we're spoiling our stomach on these big wages we're getting.

[*Laughter.*]

JAEGER. I say, Welzel, you will tell him how we've been feasting on roast pork an' sauce an' dumplings and sauerkraut, and now we're sitting at our champagne wine. [*Laughter.*]

WELZEL. The world's upside down with them to-day.

KUTSCHE. An' even if you had the champagne wine and the roast meat, you wouldn't be satisfied. I've to get on without champagne wine as well as you.

BECKER [*referring to* KUTSCHE'S *nose*]. He waters his beetroot with brandy and gin. An' it thrives upon it, too.

[*Laughter.*]

WITTIG. A p'liceman like that has a hard life. Now it's a starving beggar boy he has to lock up, then it's a pretty weaver girl he has to lead astray; then he has to get roarin' drunk an' beat his wife till she goes screamin' to the neighbors for help; and there's the ridin' about on horseback and the lyin' in bed till nine—nay, faith, but it's no easy job!

KUTSCHE. Jaw away; you'll jaw a rope round your neck in time. It's long been known what sort of a fellow you are. The magistrates know all about that dangerous tongue of yours. I know who'll drink wife and child into the poorhouse an' himself into jail before long, who it is that'll go on agitatin' and agitatin' till he brings down judgment on himself and all concerned.

WITTIG. [*Laughs bitterly.*] It's true enough—no one knows what'll be the end of it. You may be right yet. [*Bursts out in fury.*] But if it does come to that, I know who I've got to thank for it, who it is that's blabbed to the manufacturers an' all the gentlemen round, an' blackened my character to that extent that they never give me a hand's turn of work to do—an' set the peasants an' the millers against me, so that

I'm often a whole week without a horse to shoe or a wheel to put a tire on. I know who's done it. I once pulled the damned brute off his horse, because he was givin' a little stupid boy the most awful flogging for stealin' a few unripe pears. But I tell you this, Kutsche, and you know me—if you get me put into prison, you may make your own will. If I hear as much as a whisper of it, I'll take the first thing as comes handy, whether it's a horseshoe or a hammer, a wheel-spoke or a pail; I'll get hold of you if I've to drag you out of bed from beside your wife, and'll beat in your brains, as sure as my name's Wittig.

[*He has jumped up and is going to rush at* KUTSCHE.]

OLD AND YOUNG WEAVERS [*holding him back*]. Wittig, Wittig! Don't lose your head!

KUTSCHE. [*Has risen involuntarily, his face pale. He backs toward the door while speaking. The nearer the door the higher his courage rises. He speaks the last words on the threshold, and then instantly disappears.*] What are you goin' on at me about? I didn't meddle with you. I came to say something to the weavers. My business is with them an' not with you, and I've done nothing to you. But I've this to say to you weavers: The Superintendent of Police herewith forbids the singing of that song—Dreissiger's song, or whatever it is you call it. And if the yelling of it on the streets isn't stopped at once, he'll provide you with plenty of time and leisure for going on with it in jail. You may sing there, on bread and water, to your hearts' content. [*Goes out.*]

WITTIG. [*Roars after him.*] He's no right to forbid it—not if we were to roar till the windows shook an' they could hear us at Reichenbach—not if we sang till the manufacturers' houses tumbled about their ears an' all the Superintendents' helmets danced on the top of their heads. It's nobody's business but our own.

[BECKER *has in the meantime got up, made a signal for singing, and now leads off, the others joining in.*]

The justice to us weavers dealt
Is bloody, cruel, and hateful;
Our life's one torture, long drawn out;
For Lynch law we'd be grateful.

[WELZEL *attempts to quiet them but they pay no attention to him.* WIEGAND *puts his hands to his ears and rushes off. During the singing of the next verse the weavers rise and form into procession behind* BECKER *and* WITTIG, *who have given pantomimic signs for a general break-up.*]

Stretched on the rack, day after day,
Hearts sick and bodies aching,
Our heavy sighs their witness bear
To spirits slowly breaking.

[*Most of the weavers sing the following verse out on the street, only a few young fellows, who are paying, being still in the bar. At the conclusion of the verse no one is left in the room except* WELZEL *and his wife and daughter,* HORNIG, *and* OLD BAUMERT.]

You villains all, you brood of hell,
You fiends in fashion human,
A curse will fall on all like you
Who prey on man and woman.

WELZEL [*phlegmatically collecting the glasses*]. Their backs are up to-day, and no mistake.

HORNIG. [*To* OLD BAUMERT, *who is preparing to go.*] What in the name of Heaven are they up to, Baumert?

BAUMERT. They're goin' to Dreissiger's to make him add something on to the pay.

WELZEL. And are you joining in these foolish ongoings?

OLD BAUMERT. I've no choice, Welzel. The young men may an' the old men must. [*Goes out rather shamefacedly.*]

HORNIG. It'll not surprise me if this ends badly.

WELZEL. To think that even old fellows like him are goin' right off their heads!

HORNIG. We all set our hearts on something!

THE FOURTH ACT

Peterswaldau. Private room of Dreissiger, *the fustian manufacturer—Luxuriously furnished in the chilly taste of the first half of this century. Ceiling, doors, and stove are white, and the wall paper, with its small, straight-lined floral pattern, is dull and cold in tone. The furniture is mahogany, richly-carved, and upholstered in red. On the right, between two windows with crimson damask curtains, stands the writing-table, a high bureau with falling flap. Directly opposite to this is the sofa, with the strong-box beside it; in front of the sofa a table, with chairs and easy-chairs arranged about it. Against the back wall is a gun-cupboard. All three walls are decorated with bad pictures in gilt frames. Above the sofa is a mirror with a heavily gilt rococo frame. On the left an ordinary door leads into the hall. An open folding-door at the back shows the drawing-room, overfurnished in the same style of comfortless splendor. Two ladies,* Mrs. Dreissiger *and* Mrs. Kittelhaus, *the Pastor's wife, are seen in the drawing-room, looking at pictures.* Pastor Kittelhaus *is there too, engaged in conversation with* Weinhold, *the tutor, a theological graduate.*

Kittelhaus [*a kindly little elderly man, enters the front room, smoking and talking to the tutor, who is also smoking; he looks round and shakes his head in surprise at finding the room empty*]. You are young, Mr. Weinhold, which explains everything. At your age we old fellows held—well, I won't say the same opinions—but certainly opinions of the same tendency. And there's something fine about youth—youth with its grand ideals. But unfortunately, Mr. Weinhold, they don't last; they are as fleeting as April sunshine. Wait till you are my age. When a man has said his say from the pulpit for thirty years—fifty-two times every year, not including saints' days—he has inevitably calmed down. Think of me, Mr. Weinhold, when you come that length.

WEINHOLD [*nineteen, pale, thin, tall, with lanky fair hair; restless and nervous in his movements*]. With all due respect, Mr. Kittelhaus—I can't think—people have such different natures.

KITTELHAUS. My dear Mr. Weinhold, however restless-minded and unsettled a man may be—[*in a tone of reproof*]—and you are a case in point—however violently and wantonly he may attack the existing order of things, he calms down in the end. I grant you, certainly, that among our professional brethren individuals are to be found, who, at a fairly advanced age, still play youthful pranks. One preaches against the drink evil and founds temperance societies, another publishes appeals which undoubtedly read most effectively. But what good do they do? The distress among the weavers, where it does exist, is in no way lessened—but the peace of society is undermined. No, no; one feels inclined in such cases to say: Cobbler, stick to your last; don't take to caring for the belly, you who have the care of souls. Preach the pure Word of God, and leave all else to Him who provides shelter and food for the birds, and clothes the lilies of the field. But I should like to know where our good host, Mr. Dreissiger, has suddenly disappeared to.

[MRS. DREISSIGER, *followed by* MRS. KITTELHAUS, *now comes forward. She is a pretty woman of thirty, of a healthy, florid type. A certain discordance is noticeable between her deportment and way of expressing herself and her rich, elegant toilette.*]

MRS. DREISSIGER. That's what I want to know, too, Mr. Kittelhaus. But it's what William always does. No sooner does a thing come into his head than off he goes and leaves me in the lurch. I've said enough about it, but it does no good.

KITTELHAUS. It's always the way with business men, my dear Mrs. Dreissiger.

WEINHOLD. I'm almost certain that something has happened downstairs.

[DREISSIGER *enters, hot and excited.*]

DREISSIGER. Well, Rosa, is coffee served?

MRS. DREISSIGER [*sulkily*]. Fancy your needing to run away again!

DREISSIGER [*carelessly*]. Ah! these are things you don't understand.

KITTELHAUS. Excuse me—has anything happened to annoy you, Mr. Dreissiger?

DREISSIGER. Never a day passes without that, my dear sir. I am accustomed to it. What about that coffee, Rosa?

[MRS. DREISSIGER *goes ill-humoredly and gives one or two violent tugs at the broad embroidered bell-pull.*]

DREISSIGER. I wish you had been down stairs just now, Mr. Weinhold. You'd have gained a little experience. Besides . . . But now let us have our game of whist.

KITTELHAUS. By all means, sir. Shake off the dust and burden of the day, Mr. Dreissiger; forget it in our company.

DREISSIGER. [*Has gone to the window, pushed aside a curtain, and is looking out.*] Vile rabble!! Come here, Rosa! [*She goes to the window.*] Look . . . that tall red-haired fellow there! . . .

KITTELHAUS. That's the man they call Red Becker.

DREISSIGER. Is he the man that insulted you the day before yesterday? You remember what you told me—when John was helping you into the carriage?

MRS. DREISSIGER [*pouting, carelessly*]. I'm sure I don't know.

DREISSIGER. Come now, what's the use of being cross? I must know. If he's the man, I mean to have him arrested. [*The strains of the Weavers' Song are heard.*] Listen to that! Just listen!

KITTELHAUS [*highly incensed*]. Is there to be no end to this nuisance? I must acknowledge now that it is time for the police to interfere. Permit me. [*He goes forward to the window.*] See, see, Mr. Weinhold! These are not only young people. There are numbers of steady-going old weavers among

them, men whom I have known for years and looked upon as most deserving and God-fearing. There they are, taking part in this intolerable uproar, trampling God's law under foot. Do you mean to tell me that you still defend these people?

WEINHOLD. Certainly not, Mr. Kittelhaus. That is, sir . . . *cum grano salis.* For after all, they are hungry and they are ignorant. They are giving expression to their dissatisfaction in the only way they understand. I don't expect that such people . . .

MRS. KITTELHAUS. [*Short, thin, faded, more like an old maid than a married woman.*] Mr. Weinhold, Mr. Weinhold, how can you?

DREISSIGER. Mr. Weinhold, I am sorry to be obliged to . . . I didn't bring you into my house to give me lectures on philanthropy, and I must request that you will confine yourself to the education of my boys, and leave my other affairs entirely to me—entirely! Do you understand?

WEINHOLD. [*Stands for a moment rigid and deathly pale, then bows, with a strained smile. In a low voice.*] Certainly, of course I understand. I have seen this coming. It is my wish too. [*Goes out.*]

DREISSIGER [*rudely*]. As soon as possible then, please. We require the room.

MRS. DREISSIGER. William, William!

DREISSIGER. Have you lost your senses, Rosa, that you're taking the part of a man who defends a low, blackguardly libel like that song?

MRS. DREISSIGER. But, William, he didn't defend it.

DREISSIGER. Mr. Kittelhaus, did he defend it or did he not?

KITTELHAUS. His youth must be his excuse, Mr. Dreissiger.

MRS. KITTELHAUS. I can't understand it. The young man comes of such a good, respectable family. His father held a public appointment for forty years, without a breath on his reputation. His mother was overjoyed at his getting this good situation here. And now . . . he himself shows so little appreciation of it.

PFEIFER [*suddenly opens the door leading from the hall and shouts in*]. Mr. Dreissiger, Mr. Dreissiger! they've got him! Will you come, please? They've caught one of them.

DREISSIGER [*hastily*]. Has some one gone for the police?

PFEIFER. The Superintendent's on his way upstairs.

DREISSIGER [*at the door*]. Glad to see you, sir. We want you here.

[KITTELHAUS *makes signs to the ladies that it will be better for them to retire. He, his wife, and* MRS. DREISSIGER *disappear into the drawing-room.*]

DREISSIGER [*exasperated, to the* POLICE SUPERINTENDENT, *who has now entered*]. I have at last had one of the ringleaders seized by my dyers. I could stand it no longer—their insolence was beyond all bounds—quite unbearable. I have visitors in my house, and these blackguards dare to . . . They insult my wife whenever she shows herself; my boys' lives are not safe. My visitors run the risk of being jostled and cuffed. Is it possible that in a well-ordered community incessant public insult offered to unoffending people like myself and my family should pass unpunished? If so . . . then . . . then I must confess that I have other ideas of law and order.

SUPERINTENDENT. [*A man of fifty, middle height; corpulent, full-blooded. He wears cavalry uniform with a long sword and spurs.*] No, no, Mr. Dreissiger . . . certainly not! I am entirely at your disposal. Make your mind easy on the subject. Dispose of me as you will. What you have done is quite right. I am delighted that you have had one of the ringleaders arrested. I am very glad indeed that a settling day has come. There are a few disturbers of the peace here whom I have long had my eye on.

DREISSIGER. Yes, one or two raw lads, lazy vagabonds, that shirk every kind of work, and lead a life of low dissipation, hanging about the public-houses until they've sent their last halfpenny down their throats. But I'm determined to put a stop to the trade of these professional blackguards once and

for all. It's in the public interest to do so, not only my private interest.

SUPERINTENDENT. Of course it is! Most undoubtedly, Mr. Dreissiger! No one can possibly blame you. And everything that lies in my power.

DREISSIGER. The cat-o'-nine tails is what should be taken to the beggarly pack.

SUPERINTENDENT. You're right, quite right. We must make an example.

[KUTSCHE, *the policeman, enters and salutes. The door is open, and the sound of heavy steps stumbling up the stairs is heard.*]

KUTSCHE. I have to inform you, sir, that we have arrested a man.

DREISSIGER. [*To* SUPERINTENDENT.] Do you wish to see the fellow?

SUPERINTENDENT. Certainly, most certainly. We must begin by having a look at him at close quarters. Oblige me, Mr. Dreissiger, by not speaking to him at present. I'll see to it that you get complete satisfaction or my name's not Heide.

DREISSIGER. That's not enough for me, though. He goes before the magistrates. My mind's made up.

[JAEGER *is led in by five dyers, who have come straight from their work—faces, hands, and clothes stained with dye. The prisoner, his cap set jauntily on the side of his head, presents an appearance of impudent gayety; he is excited by the brandy he has just drunk.*]

JAEGER. Hounds that you are!—Call yourselves workingmen!—Pretend to be comrades! Before I would do such a thing as lay my hands on a mate, I'd see my hand rot off my arm!

[*At a sign from the* SUPERINTENDENT, KUTSCHE *orders the dyers to let go their victim.* JAEGER *straightens himself up, quite free and easy. Both doors are guarded.*]

SUPERINTENDENT. [*Shouts to* JAEGER.] Off with your cap, sir. [JAEGER *takes it off, but very slowly, still with an impudent grin on his face.*] What's your name!

JAEGER. What's yours? I'm not your swineherd.

[*Great excitement is produced among the audience by this reply.*]

DREISSIGER. This is too much of a good thing.

SUPERINTENDENT. [*Changes color, is on the point of breaking out furiously, but controls his rage.*] We'll see about this afterwards.—Once more, what's your name? [*Receiving no answer, furiously.*] If you don't answer at once, fellow, I'll have you flogged on the spot.

JAEGER. [*Perfectly cheerful, not showing by so much as the twitch of an eyelid that he has heard the* SUPERINTENDENT'S *angry words, calls over the heads of those around him to a pretty servant girl, who has brought in the coffee and is standing open-mouthed with astonishment at the unexpected sight.*] Hullo, Emmy, do you belong to this company now? The sooner you find your way out of it, then, the better. A wind may begin to blow here, an' blow everything away overnight.

[*The girl stares at* JAEGER, *and as soon as she comprehends that it is to her he is speaking, blushes with shame, covers her eyes with her hands, and rushes out, leaving the coffee things in confusion on the table. Renewed excitement among those present.*]

SUPERINTENDENT. [*Half beside himself, to* DREISSIGER.] Never in all my long service . . . such a case of shameless effrontery . . . [JAEGER *spits on the floor.*]

DREISSIGER. I'll thank you to remember that this is not a stable.

SUPERINTENDENT. My patience is at an end now. For the last time: What's your name?

[KITTELHAUS *has been peering out at the partly opened drawing-room door, listening to what has been going on, can no longer refrain from coming forward to interfere. He is trembling with excitement.*]

KITTELHAUS. His name is Jaeger, sir. Moritz . . . is it not? Moritz Jaeger. [*To* JAEGER.] And, Jaeger, you know me.

JAEGER [*seriously*]. You are Pastor Kittelhaus.

KITTELHAUS. Yes, I am your pastor, Jaeger! It was I who received you, a babe in swaddling clothes, into the Church of Christ. From my hand you took for the first time the body of the Lord. Do you remember that, and how I toiled and strove to bring God's Word home to your heart? Is this your gratitude?

JAEGER [*like a scolded schoolboy, in a surly voice.*] I paid my half-crown like the rest.

KITTELHAUS. Money, money . . . Do you imagine that the miserable little bit of money . . . Such utter nonsense! I'd much rather you kept your money. Be a good man, be a Christian! Think of what you promised. Keep God's law. Money, money! . . .

JAEGER. I'm a Quaker now, sir. I don't believe in anything.

KITTELHAUS. Quaker! What are you talking about? Try to behave yourself, and don't use words you don't understand. Quaker, indeed! They are good Christian people, and not heathens like you.

SUPERINTENDENT. Mr. Kittelhaus, I must ask you . . . [*He comes between the Pastor and* JAEGER.] Kutsche! tie his hands!

[*Wild yelling outside: "Jaeger, Jaeger! come out!"*]

DREISSIGER. [*like the others, slightly startled, goes instinctively to the window.*] What's the meaning of this next?

SUPERINTENDENT. Oh, I understand well enough. It means that they want to have the blackguard out among them again. But we're not going to oblige them. Kutsche, you have your orders. He goes to the lock-up.

KUTSCHE [*with the rope in his hand, hesitating*]. By your leave, sir, but it'll not be an easy job. There's a confounded big crowd out there—a pack of raging devils. They've got Becker with them, and the smith . . .

KITTELHAUS. Allow me one more word!—So as not to rouse still worse feeling, would it not be better if we tried to arrange things peaceably? Perhaps Jaeger will give his word to go with us quietly, or . . .

SUPERINTENDENT. Quite impossible! Think of my responsibility. I couldn't allow such a thing. Come, Kutsche! lose no more time.

JAEGER [*putting his hands together, and holding them out*]. Tight, tight, as tight as ever you can! It's not for long.

[KUTSCHE, *assisted by the workmen, ties his hands.*]

SUPERINTENDENT. Now, off with you, march! [*To* DREISSIGER.] If you feel anxious, let six of the weavers go with them. They can walk on each side of him, I'll ride in front, and Kutsche will bring up the rear. Whoever blocks the way will be cut down.

[*Cries from below: "Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo-oo! Bow, wow, wow!"*]

SUPERINTENDENT [*with a threatening gesture in the direction of the window*]. You rascals, I'll cock-a-doodle-doo and bow-wow you! Forward! March!

[*He marches out first, with drawn sword; the others, with* JAEGER, *follow.*]

JAEGER. [*Shouts as he goes.*] An' Mrs. Dreissiger there may play the lady as proud as she likes, but for all that she's no better than us. Many a hundred times she's served my father with a half penny-worth of schnapps. Left wheel—march! [*Exit laughing.*]

DREISSIGER [*after a pause, with apparent calmness*]. Well, Mr. Kittelhaus, shall we have our game now? I think there will be no further interruption. [*He lights a cigar, giving short laughs as he does so; when it is lighted, bursts into a regular fit of laughing.*] I'm beginning now to think the whole thing very funny. That fellow! [*Still laughing nervously.*] It really is too comical: first came the dispute at dinner with Weinhold—five minutes after that he takes leave—off to the

other end of the world; then this affair crops up—and now we'll proceed with our whist.

KITTELHAUS. Yes, but . . . [*Roaring is heard outside.*] Yes, but . . . that's a terrible uproar they're making outside.

DREISSIGER. All we have to do is to go into the other room; it won't disturb us in the least there.

KITTELHAUS [*shaking his head*]. I wish I knew what has come over these people. In so far I must agree with Mr. Weinhold, or at least till quite lately I was of his opinion, that the weavers were a patient, humble, easily-led class. Was it not your idea of them, too, Mr. Dreissiger?

DREISSIGER. Most certainly that is what they used to be—patient, easily managed, peaceable people. They were that as long as these so-called humanitarians let them alone. But for ever so long now they've had the awful misery of their condition held up to them. Think of all the societies and associations for the alleviation of the distress among the weavers. At last the weaver believes in it himself, and his head's turned. Some of them had better come and turn it back again, for now he's fairly set a-going there's no end to his complaining. This doesn't please him, and that doesn't please him. He must have everything of the best.

[*A loud roar of "Hurrah!" is heard from the crowd.*]

KITTELHAUS. So that with all their humanitarianism they have only succeeded in almost literally turning lambs into wolves.

DREISSIGER. I won't say that, sir. When you take time to think of the matter coolly, it's possible that some good may come of it yet. Such occurrences as this will not pass unnoticed by those in authority, and may lead them to see that things can't be allowed to go on as they are doing—that means must be taken to prevent the utter ruin of our home industries.

KITTELHAUS. Possibly. But what is the cause, then, of this terrible falling off of trade?

DREISSIGER. Our best markets have been closed to us by the heavy import duties foreign countries have laid on our

goods. At home the competition is terrible, for we have no protection, none whatever.

PFEIFER. [*Staggers in, pale and breathless.*] Mr. Dreissiger, Mr. Dreissiger!

DREISSIGER [*in the act of walking into the drawing-room, turns round, annoyed*]. Well, Pfeifer, what now?

PFEIFER. Oh, sir! Oh, sir! . . . It's worse than ever!

DREISSIGER. What are they up to next?

KITTELHAUS. You're really alarming us—what is it?

PFEIFER [*still confused*]. I never saw the like. Good Lord! —The Superintendent himself . . . they'll catch it for this yet.

DREISSIGER. What's the matter with you, in the devil's name? Is any one's neck broken?

PFEIFER. [*Almost crying with fear, screams.*] They've set Moritz Jaeger free—they've thrashed the Superintendent and driven him away—they've thrashed the policeman and sent him off to—without his helmet . . . his sword broken . . . Oh dear, oh dear!

DREISSIGER. I think you've gone crazy, Pfeifer.

KITTELHAUS. This is actual riot.

PFEIFER [*sitting on a chair, his whole body trembling*]. It's turning serious, Mr. Dreissiger! Mr. Dreissiger, it's serious now!

DREISSIGER. Well, if that's all the police . . .

PFEIFER. Mr. Dreissiger, it's serious now!

DREISSIGER. Damn it all, Pfeifer, will you hold your tongue?

MRS. DREISSIGER [*coming out of the drawing-room with* MRS. KITTELHAUS]. This is really too bad, William. Our whole evening's being spoiled. Here's Mrs. Kittelhaus saying that she'd better go home.

KITTELHAUS. You mustn't take it amiss, dear Mrs. Dreissiger, but perhaps, under the circumstances, it *would* be better . . .

MRS. DREISSIGER. But, William, why in the world don't you go out and put a stop to it?

DREISSIGER. Go you and try if you can do it. Try! Go and speak to them! [*Standing helplessly in front of the pastor.*] Am I such a tyrant? Am I a cruel master?

[*Enter* JOHN *the coachman.*]

JOHN. If you please, m'm, I've put to the horses. Mr. Weinhold's put Georgie and Charlie into the carriage. If it comes to the worst, we're ready to be off.

MRS. DREISSIGER. If what comes to the worst?

JOHN. I'm sure I don't know, m'm. But the crowd's gettin' bigger and bigger, an' they sent the Superintendent an' the policeman to the right-about.

PFEIFER. It's serious now, Mr. Dreissiger! It's serious!

MRS. DREISSIGER [*with increasing alarm*]. What's going to happen?—What do the people want?—They're never going to attack us, John?

JOHN. There's some rascally hounds among 'em, ma'am.

PFEIFER. It's serious now! serious!

DREISSIGER. Hold your tongue, fool!—Are the doors barred?

KITTELHAUS. I ask you as a favor, Mr. Dreissiger . . . as a favor . . . I am determined to . . . I ask you as a favor . . . [*To* JOHN.] What demands are the people making?

JOHN [*awkwardly*]. It's higher wages they're after, the blackguards.

KITTELHAUS. Good, good!—I shall go out and do my duty. I shall speak seriously to these people.

JOHN. Oh, sir, please, sir, don't do any such thing. Words is quite useless.

KITTELHAUS. One little favor, Mr. Dreissiger. May I ask you to post men behind the door, and to have it closed at once after me?

MRS. KITTELHAUS. O Joseph, Joseph! you're not really going out?

KITTELHAUS. I am. Inded I am, I know what I'm doing. Don't be afraid. God will protect me.

[MRS. KITTELHAUS *presses his hand, draws back, and wipes tears from her eyes.*]

KITTELHAUS [*while the murmur of a great, excited crowd is heard uninterruptedly outside*]. I'll go . . . I'll go out as if I were simply on my way home. I shall see if my sacred office . . . if the people have not sufficient respect for me left to . . . I shall try . . . [*He takes his hat and stick.*] Forward, then, in God's name!

[*Goes out accompanied by* DREISSIGER, PFEIFER, *and* JOHN.]

MRS. KITTELHAUS. Oh, dear Mrs. Dreissiger! [*She bursts into tears and embraces her.*] I do trust nothing will happen to him.

MRS. DREISSIGER [*absently*]. I don't know how it is, Mrs. Kittelhaus, but I . . . I can't tell you how I feel. I didn't think such a thing was possible. It's . . . it's as if it was a sin to be rich. If I had been told about all this beforehand, Mrs. Kittelhaus, I don't know but what I would rather have been left in my own humble position.

MRS. KITTELHAUS. There are troubles and disappointments in every condition of life, Mrs. Dreissiger.

MRS. DREISSIGER. True, true, I can well believe that. And suppose we have more than other people . . . goodness me! we didn't steal it. It's been honestly got, every penny of it. It's not possible that the people can be going to attack us! If trade's bad, that's not William's fault, is it?

[*Loud, confused yelling is heard outside. While the two women stand gazing at each other, pale and startled,* DREISSIGER *rushes in.*]

DREISSIGER. Quick, Rosa,—put on something, and get into the carriage. I'll be after you this moment.

[*He rushes to the strong-box, and takes out papers and various articles of value.*]

[*Enter* JOHN.]

JOHN. We're ready to start. But come quickly, before they get round to the back door.

MRS. DREISSIGER [*in a transport of fear, throwing her arms around* JOHN'S *neck*]. John, John, dear, good John! Save us, John. Save my boys! Oh, what is to become of us?

DREISSIGER. Rosa, try to keep your head. Let John go.

JOHN. Yes, yes, ma'am! Don't you be frightened. Our good horses'll soon leave them all behind; an' whoever doesn't get out of the way'll be driven over.

MRS. KITTELHAUS [*in helpless anxiety*]. But my husband . . . my husband? But, Mr. Dreissiger, my husband?

DREISSIGER. He's in safety now, Mrs. Kittelhaus. Don't alarm yourself; he's all right.

MRS. KITTELHAUS. Something dreadful has happened to him. I know it. You needn't try to keep it from me.

DREISSIGER. You mustn't take it to heart—they'll be sorry for it yet. I know exactly whose fault it was. Such a detestable, shameful outrage will not go unpunished. A community laying hands on its own pastor and maltreating him—abominable! Mad dogs they are—raging brutes—and they'll be treated as such. [*To his wife who still stands petrified.*] Go, for my sake, Rosa, go quickly! [*The clatter of window panes being smashed on the ground floor is heard.*] They've gone quite mad. There's nothing for it but to get away as fast as we can.

[*Cries of "Feifer, come out!"—"We want Feifer!"—"Feifer, come out!" are heard.*]

MRS. DREISSIGER. Feifer, Feifer, they want Feifer!

PFEIFER. [*Dashes in.*] Mr. Dreissiger, there are people at the back gate already, and the house door won't hold much longer. The smith's battering it in with a stable pail.

[*The cry sounds louder and clearer: "Feifer! Feifer! Feifer! come out!"* MRS. DREISSIGER *rushes off as if pursued.* MRS. KITTELHAUS *follows.* PFEIFER *listens, and changes color as he hears what the cry is. A perfect panic of fear seizes him; he weeps, entreats, whimpers, writhes, all at the same moment. He overwhelms* DREISSIGER *with childish caresses, strokes his*

cheeks and arms, kisses his hands, and at last, like a drowning man, throws his arms round him and prevents him moving.]

PFEIFER. Dear, good, kind Mr. Dreissiger, don't leave me behind. I've always served you faithfully. I've always treated the people well. I couldn't give them more wages than the fixed rate. Don't leave me here—they'll do for me! If they find me, they'll kill me. O God! O God! My wife, my children!

DREISSIGER [*making his way out, vainly endeavoring to free himself from* PFEIFER'S *clutch*]. Can't you let me go, fellow? It'll be all right; it'll be all right.

[*For a few seconds the room is empty. Windows are broken in the drawing-room. A loud crash resounds through the house, followed by shouts of "Hurrah!" For an instant there is silence. Then gentle, cautious steps are heard on the stair, then timid, hushed ejaculations: "To the left!"—"Up with you!"—"Hush!" —"Slow, slow!"—"Don't shove like that!"—"Its a wedding we're goin' to!"—"Stop that crowding!"— "You go first!"—"No, you go!"*]

[*Young weavers and weaver girls appear at the door leading from the hall, not daring to enter, but each trying to shove the other in. In the course of a few moments their timidity is overcome, and the poor, thin, ragged or patched figures, many of them sickly-looking, disperse themselves through* DREISSIGER'S *room and the drawing-room, first gazing timidly and curiously at everything, then beginning to touch things. Girls sit down on the sofas, whole groups admire themselves in the mirrors, men stand up on chairs, examine the pictures and take them down. There is a steady influx of miserable-looking creatures from the hall.*]

FIRST OLD WEAVER [*entering*]. No, no, this is carryin' it too far. They've started smashing things downstairs. There's no

sense nor reason in that. There'll be a bad end to it. No man in his wits would do that. I'll keep clear of such ongoings.

[JAEGER, BECKER, WITTIG *carrying a wooden pail,* BAUMERT, *and a number of other old and young weavers, rush in as if in pursuit of something, shouting hoarsely.*]

JAEGER. Where has he gone?

BECKER. Where's the cruel brute?

BAUMERT. If we can eat grass, he may eat sawdust.

WITTIG. We'll hang him whenever we catch him.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER. We'll take him by the legs and fling him out at the window, onto the stones. He'll never get up again.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER. [*Enters.*] He's off!

ALL. Who?

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER. Dreissiger.

BECKER. Feifer too?

VOICES. Let's get hold of Feifer. Look for Feifer!

BAUMERT. Yes, yes! Feifer! Tell him there's a weaver here for him to starve. [*Laughter.*]

JAEGER. If we can't lay hands on that brute Dreissiger himself . . . we'll at any rate make a poor man of him.

BAUMERT. As poor as a church mouse . . . we'll see to that!

[*All, bent on the work of destruction, rush towards the drawing-room door.*]

BECKER [*who is leading, turns round and stops the others*]. Halt! Listen to me! This is nothing but a beginning. When we're done here, we'll go straight to Bielau, to Dittrich's, where the steam power-looms are. The whole mischief's done by these factories.

OLD ANSORGE. [*Enters from hall. Takes a few steps, then stops and looks round, bewildered; shakes his head, taps his forehead.*] Who am I? Weaver Anton Ansorge. Has he gone mad, Old Ansorge? My head's goin' round like a humming-top, sure enough. What's he doing here? He'll do whatever he's a mind to. Where is Ansorge? [*He taps his forehead re-*

peatedly.] Something wrong! I'm not answerable! I'm off my head! Off with you, off with you, rioters that you are! Heads off, legs off, hands off! If you take my house, I take your house. Forward, forward!

[*Goes yelling into the drawing-room, followed by a yelling, laughing mob.*]

THE FIFTH ACT

Langen-Bielau. Old Weaver Hilse's *workroom. On the left a small window, in front of which stands the loom. On the right a bed, with a table pushed close to it. Stove, with stove-bench, in the right-hand corner. Family worship is going on.* Hilse, *his old, blind, and almost deaf wife, his son* Gottlieb, *and* Luise, Gottlieb's *wife, are sitting at the table, on the bed and wooden stools. A winding-wheel and bobbins on the floor between table and loom. Old spinning, weaving, and winding implements are disposed of on the smoky rafters; hanks of yarn are hanging down. There is much useless lumber in the low narrow room. The door, which is in the back wall, and leads into the big outer passage, or entry-room of the house, stands open. Through another open door on the opposite side of the passage, a second, in most respects similar weaver's room is seen. The large passage, or entry-room of the house, is paved with stone, has damaged plaster, and a tumble-down wooden staircase leading to the attics; a washing-tub on a stool is partly visible; dirty linen of the most miserable description and poor household utensils lie about untidily. The light falls from the left into all three apartments.*

Old Hilse *is a bearded man of strong build, but bent and wasted with age, toil, sickness, and hardship. He is an old soldier, and has lost an arm. His nose is sharp, his complexion ashen-gray, and he shakes; he is nothing but skin and bone, and has the deep-set, sore weaver's eyes.*

Old Hilse. [*Stands up, as do his son and daughter-in-law; prays.*] O Lord, we know not how to be thankful enough to Thee, for that Thou hast spared us this night again in thy goodness . . . an' hast had pity on us . . . an' hast suffered us to take no harm. Thou art the All-Merciful, an' we are poor, sinful children of men—that bad that we are not worthy to be trampled under thy feet. Yet Thou art our loving Father, an' Thou will look upon us an' accept us for the sake of thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Jesus' blood and righteousness, Our covering is and glorious dress." An' if we're sometimes too sore cast down under thy chastening—when the fire of thy purification burns too raging hot—oh, lay it not to our charge; forgive us our sin. Give us patience, heavenly Father, that after all these sufferin's we may be made partakers of thy eternal blessedness. Amen.

Mother Hilse [*who has been bending forward, trying hard to hear*]. What a beautiful prayer you do say, father!

[Luise *goes off to the wash-tub,* Gottlieb *to the room on the other side of the passage.*]

Old Hilse. Where's the little lass?

Luise. She's gone to Peterswaldau, to Dreissiger's. She finished all she had to wind last night.

Old Hilse [*speaking very loud*]. You'd like the wheel now, mother, eh?

Mother Hilse. Yes, father, I'm quite ready.

Old Hilse [*setting it down before her*]. I wish I could do the work for you.

Mother Hilse. An' what would be the good of that, father? There would I be, sittin' not knowin' what to do.

Old Hilse. I'll give your fingers a wipe, then, so that they'll not grease the yarn. [*He wipes her hands with a rag.*]

Luise [*at her tub*]. If there's grease on her hands, it's not from what she's eaten.

Old Hilse. If we've no butter, we can eat dry bread—when we've no bread, we can eat potatoes—when there's no potatoes left, we can eat bran.

LUISE [*saucily*]. An' when that's all eaten, we'll do as the Wenglers did—we'll find out where the skinner's buried some stinking old horse, an' we'll dig it up an' live for a week or two on rotten carrion—how nice that'll be!

GOTTLIEB [*from the other room*]. There you are, letting that tongue of yours run away with you again.

OLD HILSE. You should think twice, lass, before you talk that godless way. [*He goes to his loom, calls.*] Can you give me a hand, Gottlieb?—there's a few threads to pull through.

LUISE [*from her tub*]. Gottlieb, you're wanted to help father.

[GOTTLIEB *comes in, and he and his father set themselves to the troublesome task of "drawing and slaying," that is, pulling the strands of the warp through the "keddles" and "reed" of the loom. They have hardly begun to do this when* HORNIG *appears in the outer room.*]

HORNIG [*at the door*]. Good luck to your work!

HILSE AND HIS SON. Thank you, Hornig.

GOTTLIEB. I say, Hornig, when do you take your sleep? You're on your rounds all day, and on watch all night.

HORNIG. Sleep's gone from me nowadays.

LUISE. Glad to see you, Hornig!

OLD HILSE. And what's the news?

HORNIG. It's queer news this mornin'. The weavers at Peterswaldau have taken the law into their own hands, an' chased Dreissiger an' his whole family out of the place.

LUISE [*perceptibly agitated*]. Hornig's at his lies again.

HORNIG. No, missus, not this time, not to-day.—I've some beautiful pinafores in my cart.—No, it's God's truth I'm telling you. They've sent him to the rightabout. He came down to Reichenbach last night, but, Lord love you! they daren't take him in there, for fear of the weavers—off he had to go again, all the way to Schweinitz.

OLD HILSE. [*Has been carefully lifting threads of the web and approaching them to the holes, through which, from the*

other side, GOTTLIEB *pushes a wire hook, with which he catches them and draws them through.*] It's about time you were stopping now, Hornig!

HORNIG. It's as sure as I'm a livin' man. Every child in the place'll soon tell you the same story.

OLD HILSE. Either your wits are a-wool-gatherin' or mine are.

HORNIG. Not mine. What I'm telling you's as true as the Bible. I wouldn't believe it myself if I hadn't stood there an' seen it with my own eyes—as I see you now, Gottlieb. They've wrecked his house from the cellar to the roof. The good china came flyin' out at the garret windows, rattlin' down the roof. God only knows how many pieces of fustian are lying soakin' in the river! The water can't get away for them—it's running over the banks, the color of washin'-blue with all the indigo they've poured out at the windows—it was flyin' like clouds of sky-blue dust. Oh, it's a terrible destruction they've worked! And it's not only the house—it's the dye-works, too,—an' the stores! They've broken the stair rails, they've torn up the fine flooring—smashed the lookin'-glasses—cut an hacked an' torn an' smashed the sofas an' the chairs.—It's awful—it's worse than war.

OLD HILSE. An' you would have me believe that my fellow weavers did all that?

[*He shakes his head incredulously. Other tenants of the house have collected at the door and are listening eagerly.*]

HORNIG. Who else, I'd like to know? I could put names to every one of 'em. It was me took the sheriff through the house, an' I spoke to a whole lot of 'em, an' they answered me back quite friendly like. They did their business with little noise, but my word! they did it well. The sheriff spoke to them, and they answered him mannerly, as they always do. But there wasn't no stoppin' of them. They hacked on at the beautiful furniture as if they were workin' for wages.

OLD HILSE. *You* took the sheriff through the house?

Hornig. An' what would I be frightened of? Every one knows me. I'm always turning up, like a bad penny. But no one has anything agin' me. They're all glad to see me. Yes, I went the rounds with him, as sure as my name's Hornig. An' you may believe me or not as you like, but my heart's sore yet from the sight—an' I could see by the sheriff's face that he felt queer enough, too. Not a living word did we hear—they were doin' their work and holdin' their tongues. It was a solemn an' a woeful sight to see the poor starving creatures for once in a way takin' their revenge.

Luise [*with irrepressible excitement, trembling, wiping her eyes with her apron*]. An' right they are! It's only what should be!

Voices among the Crowd at the Door. "There's some of the same sort here."—"There's one no farther away than across the river."—"He's got four horses in his stable an' six carriages, an' he starves his weavers to keep them."

Old Hilse [*still incredulous*]. What was it set them off?

Hornig. Who knows? Who knows? One says this, another says that.

Old Hilse. What do they say?

Hornig. The story as most of them tells is that it began with Dreissiger sayin' that if the weavers were hungry they might eat grass.

[*Excitement at the door, as one person repeats this to the other, with signs of indignation.*]

Old Hilse. Well, now, Hornig—if you was to say to me: Father Hilse, says you, you'll die to-morrow, I would answer back: That may be—an' why not? You might even go to the length of saying: You'll have a visit to-morrow from the King of Prussia. But to tell me that weavers, men like me an' my son, have done such things as that—never! I'll never in this world believe it.

Mielchen. [*A pretty girl of seven, with long, loose flaxen hair, carrying a basket on her arm, comes running in, holding out a silver spoon to her mother.*] Mammy, mammy!

look what I've got! An' you're to buy me a new frock with it.

LUISE. What d' you come tearing in like that for, girl? [*With increased excitement and curiosity.*] An' what's that you've got hold of now? You've been runnin' yourself out o' breath, an' there—if the bobbins aren't in her basket yet? What's all this about?

OLD HILSE. Mielchen, where did that spoon come from?

LUISE. She found it, maybe.

HORNIG. It's worth its seven or eight shillin's at least.

OLD HILSE [*in distressed excitement*]. Off with you, lass—out of the house this moment—unless you want a lickin'! Take that spoon back where you got it from. Out you go! Do you want to make thieves of us all, eh? I'll soon drive that out of you.

[*He looks round for something to beat her with.*]

MIELCHEN [*clinging to her mother's skirts, crying*]. No, grandfather, no! don't lick me! We—we did find them. All the other bob—bobbin . . . girls has . . . has them too.

LUISE [*half frightened, half excited*]. I was right, you see. She found it. Where did you find it, Mielchen?

MIELCHEN [*sobbing*]. At—at Peterswal—dau. We—we found them in front of—in front of Drei—Dreissiger's house.

OLD HILSE. This is worse an' worse! Get off with you this moment, unless you would like me to help you.

MOTHER HILSE. What's all the to-do about?

HORNIG. I'll tell you what, Father Hilse. The best way'll be for Gottlieb to put on his coat an' take the spoon to the police office.

OLD HILSE. Gottlieb, put on your coat.

GOTTLIEB [*pulling it on, eagerly*]. Yes, an' I'll go right in to the office an' say they're not to blame us for it, for what can a child like that understand about it? an' I brought the spoon back at once. Stop your crying now, Mielchen!

[*The crying child is taken into the opposite room by her mother, who shuts her in and comes back.*]

HORNIG. I believe it's worth as much as nine shillin's.

GOTTLIEB. Give us a cloth to wrap it in, Luise, so that it'll take no harm. To think of the thing bein' worth all that money!

[*Tears come into his eyes while he is wrapping up the spoon.*]

LUISE. If it was only ours, we could live on it for many a day.

OLD HILSE. Hurry up, now! Look sharp! As quick as ever you can. A fine state o' matters, this! Get that devil's spoon out o' the house.

[GOTTLIEB *goes off with the spoon.*]

HORNIG. I must be off now, too.

[*He goes, is seen talking to the people in the entry-room before he leaves the house.*]

SURGEON SCHMIDT. [*A jerky little ball of a man, with a red, knowing face, comes into the entry-room.*] Good-morning, all! These are fine goings on! Take care! Take care! [*Threatening with his finger.*] You're a sly lot—that's what you are. [*At* HILSE'S *door without coming in.*] Morning, Father Hilse. [*To a woman in the outer room.*] And how are the pains, mother? Better, eh? Well, well. And how's all with you, Father Hilse? [*Enters.*] Why the deuce! what's the matter with mother?

LUISE. It's the eye veins, sir—they've dried up, so as she can't see at all now.

SURGEON SCHMIDT. That's from the dust and weaving by candle-light. Will you tell me what it means that all Peterswaldau's on the way here? I set off on my rounds this morning as usual, thinking no harm; but it wasn't long till I had my eyes opened. Strange doings these! What in the devil's name has taken possession of them, Hilse? They're like a pack of raging wolves. Riot—why, it's a revolution! they're plundering and laying waste right and left . . . Mielchen! where's Mielchen? [MIELCHEN, *her face red with crying, is*

pushed in by her mother.] Here, Mielchen, put your hand into my coat pocket. [MIELCHEN *does so.*] The ginger-bread nuts are for you. Not all at once, though, you baggage! And a song first! The fox jumped up on a . . . come, now . . . The fox jumped up . . . on a moonlight . . . Mind, I've heard what you did. You called the sparrows on the churchyard hedge a nasty name, and they're gone and told the pastor. Did any one ever hear the like? Fifteen hundred of them agog—men, women, and children. [*Distant bells are heard.*] That's at Reichenbach—alarm-bells! Fifteen hundred people! Uncomfortably like the world coming to an end!

OLD HILSE. An' it is true that they're on their way to Bielau?

SURGEON SCHMIDT. That's just what I'm telling you. I've driven through the middle of the whole crowd. What I'd have liked to do would have been to get down and give each of them a pill there and then. They were following on each other's heels like grim death, and their singing was more than enough to turn a man's stomach. I was nearly sick, and Frederick was shaking on the box like an old woman. We had to take a stiff glass at the first opportunity. I wouldn't be a manufacturer, not though I could drive my carriage and pair. [*Distant singing.*] Listen to that! It's for all the world as if they were beating at some broken old boiler. We'll have them here in five minutes, friends. Good-bye! Don't you be foolish. The troops will be upon them in no time. Keep your wits about you. The Peterswaldau people have lost theirs. [*Bells ring close at hand.*] Good gracious! There are our bells ringing too! Every one's going mad. [*He goes upstairs.*]

GOTTLIEB. [*Comes back. In the entry-room, out of breath.*] I've seen them, I've seen them! [*To a woman.*] They're here, auntie, they're here! [*At the door.*] They're here, father, they're here! They've got bean-poles, an' ox-goads, an' axes. They're standin' outside the upper Dittrich's kickin' up an awful row. I think he's payin' them money. O Lord! whatever's goin' to happen? What a crowd! Oh, you never saw

such a crowd! Dash it all—if once they make a rush, our manufacturers'll be hard put to it.

Old Hilse. What have you been runnin' like that for? You'll go racin' till you bring on your old trouble, and then we'll have you on your back again, strugglin' for breath.

Gottlieb [*almost joyously excited*]. I had to run, or they would have caught me an' kept me. They were all roarin' to me to join them. Father Baumert was there too, and says he to me: You come an' get your sixpence with the rest—you're a poor starving weaver too. An' I was to tell you, father, from him, that you were to come an' help to pay out the manufacturers for their grindin' of us down. Other times is coming, he says. There's going to be a change of days for us weavers. An' we're all to come an' help to bring it about. We're to have our half-pound of meat on Sundays, and now and again on a holiday sausage with our cabbage. Yes, things is to be quite different, by what he tells me.

Old Hilse [*with repressed indignation*]. An' that man calls himself your godfather! and he bids you take part in such works of wickedness? Have nothing to do with them, Gottlieb. They've let themselves be tempted by Satan, an' it's his works they're doin'.

Luise [*no longer able to restrain her passionate excitement, vehemently*]. Yes, Gottlieb, get into the chimney corner, an' take a spoon in your hand, an' a dish of skim milk on your knee, an' put on a petticoat an' say your prayers, an' then father'll be pleased with you. And *he* sets up to be a man!

[*Laughter from the people in the entry-room.*]

Old Hilse [*quivering with suppressed rage*]. An' you set up to be a good wife, eh? You call yourself a mother, an' let your evil tongue run away with you like that? You think yourself fit to teach your girl, you that would egg on your husband to crime an' wickedness?

Luise. [*Has lost all control of herself.*] You an' your piety an' religion—did they serve to keep the life in my poor children? In rags an' dirt they lay, all the four—it didn't as

much as keep them dry. Yes! I set up to be a mother, that's what I do—an' if you'd like to know it, that's why I would send all the manufacturers to hell—because I'm a mother!—Not one of the four could I keep in life! It was cryin' more than breathin' with me from the time each poor little thing came into the world till death took pity on it. The devil a bit you cared! You sat there prayin' and singin', and let me run about till my feet bled, tryin' to get one little drop o' skim milk. How many hundred nights have I lain an' racked my head to think what I could do to cheat the churchyard of my little one? What harm has a baby like that done that it must come to such a miserable end—eh? An' over there at Dittrich's they're bathed in wine an' washed in milk. No! you may talk as you like, but if they begin here, ten horses won't hold me back. An' what's more—if there's a rush on Dittrich's, you'll see me in the forefront of it—an' pity the man as tries to prevent me—I've stood it long enough, so now you know it.

Old Hilse. You're a lost soul—there's no help for you.

Luise [*frenzied*]. It's you that there's no help for! Tatter-breeched scarecrows—that's what you are—an' not men at all. Whey-faced gutter-scrapers that take to your heels at the sound of a child's rattle. Fellows that say "thank you" to the man as gives you a hidin'. They've not left that much blood in you as that you can turn red in the face. You should have the whip taken to you, an' a little pluck flogged into your rotten bones. [*She goes out quickly.*]

[*Embarrassed pause.*]

Mother Hilse. What's the matter with Liesl, father?

Old Hilse. Nothin', mother! What should be the matter with her?

Mother Hilse. Father, is it only me that's thinkin' it, or are the bells ringin'?

Old Hilse. It'll be a funeral, mother.

Mother Hilse. An' I've got to sit waitin' here yet. Why must I be so long a-dyin', father? [*Pause.*]

Old Hilse. [*Leaves his work, holds himself up straight; solemnly.*] Gottlieb!—you heard all your wife said to us. Look here, Gottlieb! [*He bares his breast.*] Here they cut out a bullet as big as a thimble. The King knows where I lost my arm. It wasn't the mice as ate it. [*He walks up and down.*] Before that wife of yours was ever thought of, I had spilled my blood by the quart for King an' country. So let her call what names she likes—an' welcome! It does me no harm.—Frightened? Me frightened? What would I be frightened of, will you tell me that? Of the few soldiers, maybe, that'll be comin' after the rioters? Good gracious me! That would be a lot to be frightened at! No, no, lad; I may be a bit stiff in the back, but there's some strength left in the old bones; I've got the stuff in me yet to make a stand against a few rubbishin' bay'nets.—An' if it came to the worse! Willin', willin' would I be to say good-bye to this weary world. Death would be welcome—welcomer to me to-day than to-morrow. For what is it we leave behind? That old bundle of aches an' pains we call our body, the care an' the oppression we call by the name of life. We may be glad to get away from it.—But there's something to come after, Gottlieb!—an' if we've done ourselves out of that too—why, then it's all over with us!

Gottlieb. Who knows what's to come after? Nobody's seen it.

Old Hilse. Gottlieb! don't you be throwin' doubts on the one comfort us poor people have. Why have I sat here an' worked my treadle like a slave this forty year an' more?—sat still an' looked on at him over yonder livin' in pride an' wastefulness—why? Because I have a better hope, something as supports me in all my troubles. [*Points out at the window.*] You have your good things in this world—I'll have mine in the next. That's been my thought. An' I'm that certain of it—I'd let myself be torn in pieces. Have we not His promise? There's a Day of Judgment comin'; but it's not us as are the judges—no: vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

[*A cry of "Weavers, come out!" is heard outside the window.*]

OLD HILSE. Do what you will for me. [*He seats himself at his loom.*] I stay here.

GOTTLIEB [*after a short struggle*]. I'm going to work, too, —come what may. [*Goes out.*]

[*The Weavers' Song is heard, sung by hundreds of voices quite close at hand; it sounds like a dull monotonous wail.*]

INMATES OF THE HOUSE [*in the entry-room*]. "Oh, mercy on us! there they come swarmin' like ants!"—"Where can all these weavers be from?"—"Don't shove like that, I want to see too."—"Look at that great maypole of a woman leadin' on in front!"—"Gracious! they're comin' thicker an' thicker."

HORNIG. [*Comes into the entry-room from outside.*] There's a theayter play for you now! That's what you don't see every day. But you should go up to the other Dittrich's an look what they've done there. It's been no half work. He's got no house now, nor no factory, nor no wine-cellar, nor nothing. They're drinkin' out of the bottles—not so much as takin' the time to get out the corks. One, two, three, an' off with the neck, an' no matter whether they cut their mouths or not. There's some of them runnin' about bleedin' like stuck pigs.—Now they's going to do for this Dittrich.

[*The singing has stopped.*]

INMATES OF THE HOUSE. There's nothin' so very wicked-like about them.

HORNIG. You wait a bit! you'll soon see! All they're doin' just now is makin' up their minds where they'll begin. Look, they're inspectin' the palace from every side. Do you see that little stout man there, him with the stable pail? That's the smith from Peterswaldau—an' a dangerous little chap he is. He batters in the thickest doors as if they were made o' pie-crust. If a manufacturer was to fall into his hands it would be all over with him!

INMATES OF THE HOUSE. "That was a crack!"—"There went a stone through the window!"—"There's old Dittrich, shakin' with fright."—"He's hangin' out a board."—"Hangin'

out a board?"—"What's written on it?"—"Can you not read?" —"It would be a bad job for me if I couldn't read!"—"Well, read it, then!"—" 'You—shall have—full—satisfaction! You —shall have full satisfaction.' "

HORNIG. He might ha' spared himself the trouble—*that* won't help him. It's something else they've set their minds on here. It's the factories. They're going to smash up the power-looms. For it's them that are ruinin' the hand-loom weaver. Even a blind man might see that! No! the good folks know what they're after, an' no sheriff an' no p'lice superintendent'll bring them to reason—much less a bit of a board. Him as has seen them at work already know's what's comin'.

INMATES OF THE HOUSE. "Did any one ever see such a crowd?"—"What can these ones be wantin'?"—[*Hastily.*] "They're crossin' the bridge!"—[*Anxiously.*] "They're never comin' over on this side, are they?"—[*In excitement and terror.*] "It's to us they're comin'!"—"They're comin' to us!"—"They're comin' to fetch the weavers out of their houses!"

[*General flight. The entry-room is empty. A crowd of dirty, dusty rioters rush in, their faces scarlet with brandy and excitement; tattered, untidy-looking, as if they had been up all night. With the shout: "Weavers, come out!" they disperse themselves through the house.* BECKER *and several other young weavers, armed with cudgels and poles, come into* OLD HILSE'S *room. When they see the old man at his loom they start, and cool down a little.*]

BECKER. Come, Father Hilse, stop that. Leave your work to them as wants to work. There's no need now for you to be doin' yourself harm. You'll be well taken care of.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER. You'll never need to go hungry to bed again.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER. The weaver's goin' to have a roof over his head and a shirt on his back once more.

Old Hilse. An' what's the devil sendin' you to do now, with your poles an' axes?

Becker. These are what we're goin' to break on Dittrich's back.

Second Young Weaver. We'll heat them red hot an' stick them down the manufacturers' throats, so as they'll feel for once what burnin' hunger tastes like.

Third Young Weaver. Come along, Father Hilse! We'll give no quarter.

Second Young Weaver. No one had mercy on us—neither God nor man. Now we're standin' up for our rights ourselves.

[Old Baumert *enters, somewhat shaky on the legs, a newly killed cock under his arm.*]

Old Baumert [*stretching out his arms*]. My brothers—we're all brothers! Come to my arms, brothers! [*Laughter.*]

Old Hilse. And that's the state you're in, Willem?

Old Baumert. Gustav, is it you? My poor starvin' friend! Come to my arms, Gustav!

Old Hilse. [*Mutters.*] Let me alone.

Old Baumert. I'll tell you what, Gustav. It's nothin' but luck that's wanted. You look at me. What do I look like? Luck's what's wanted. Do I not look like a lord? [*Pats his stomach.*] Guess what's in there! There's food fit for a prince in that belly. When luck's with him a man gets roast hare to eat an' champagne wine to drink.—I'll tell you all something: We've made a big mistake—we must help ourselves.

All [*speaking at once*]. We must help ourselves, hurrah!

Old Baumert. As soon as we get the first good bite inside us we're different men. Damn it all! but you feel the power comin' into you till you're like an ox, an' that wild with strength that you hit out right an' left without as much as takin' time to look. Dash it, but it's grand!

Jaeger [*at the door, armed with an old cavalry sword*]. We've made one or two first-rate attacks.

Becker. We know how to set about it now. One, two, three, an' we're inside the house. Then, at it like lightning—

bang, crack, shiver! till the sparks are flyin' as if it was a smithy.

First Young Weaver. It wouldn't be half bad to light a bit o' fire.

Second Young Weaver. Let's march to Reichenbach an' burn the rich folks' houses over their heads!

Jaeger. That would be nothing but butterin' their bread. Think of all the insurance money they'd get. [*Laughter.*]

Becker. No, from here we'll go to Freiburg, to Tromtra's.

Jaeger. What would you say to givin' all them as holds Government appointments a lesson? I've read somewhere as how all our troubles come from them birocrats, as they call them.

Second Young Weaver. Before long we'll go to Breslau, for more an' more'll be joining us.

Old Baumert. [*To* Hilse.] Won't you take a drop, Gustav?

Old Hilse. I never touches it.

Old Baumert. That was in the old world; we're in a new world to-day, Gustav.

First Young Weaver. Christmas comes but once a year. [*Laughter.*]

Old Hilse [*impatiently*]. What is it you want in my house, you limbs of Satan?

Old Baumert [*a little intimidated, coaxingly*]. I was bringin' you a chicken, Gustav. I thought it would make a drop o' soup for mother.

Old Hilse [*embarrassed, almost friendly*]. Well, you can tell mother yourself.

Mother Hilse [*who has been making efforts to hear, her hand at her ear, motions them off*]. Let me alone. I don't want no chicken soup.

Old Hilse. That's right, mother. An' I want none, an' least of all that sort. An' let me say this much to you, Baumert: The devil stands on his head for joy when he hears the old ones jabberin' and talkin' as if they was infants. An' to you all I say—to every one of you: Me and you, we've got nothing to do with each other. It's not with my will that

you're here. In law an' justice you've no right to be in my house.

A Voice. Him that's not with us is against us.

Jaeger [*roughly and threateningly*]. You're a cross-grained old chap, and I'd have you remember that we're not thieves.

A Voice. We're hungry men, that's all.

First Young Weaver. We want to *live*—that's all. An' so we've cut the rope we were hung up with.

Jaeger. And we were in our right! [*Holding his fist in front of the old man's face.*] Say another word, and I'll give you one between the eyes.

Becker. Come now, Jaeger, be quiet. Let the old man alone.—What we say to ourselves, Father Hilse, is this: Better dead than begin the old life again.

Old Hilse. Have I not lived that life for sixty years an' more?

Becker. That doesn't help us—there's got to be a change.

Old Hilse. On the Judgment Day.

Becker. What they'll not give us willingly we're going to take by force.

Old Hilse. By force. [*Laughs.*] You may as well go an' dig your graves at once. They'll not be long showin' you where the force lies. Wait a bit, lad!

Jaeger. Is it the soldiers you're meaning? We've been soldiers, too. We'll soon do for a company or two of them.

Old Hilse. With your tongues, maybe. But supposin' you did—for two that you'd beat off, ten'll come back.

Voices. [*Call through the window.*] The soldiers are comin'! Look out!

[*General, sudden silence. For a moment a faint sound of fifes and drums is heard; in the ensuing silence a short, involuntary exclamation, "The devil! I'm off!" followed by general laughter.*]

Becker. Who was that? Who speaks of running away?

Jaeger. Which of you is it that's afraid of a few paltry

helmets? You have me to command you, and I've been in the trade. I know their tricks.

Old Hilse. An' what are you goin' to shoot with? Your sticks, eh?

First Young Weaver. Never mind that old chap; he's wrong in the upper story.

Second Young Weaver. Yes, he's a bit off his head.

Gottlieb. [*Has made his way unnoticed among the rioters; catches hold of the speaker.*] Would you give your impudence to an old man like him?

Second Young Weaver. Let me alone. 'T wasn't anything bad I said.

Old Hilse [*interfering*]. Let him jaw, Gottlieb. What would you be meddlin' with him for? He'll soon see who it is that's been off his head to-day, him or me.

Becker. Are you comin', Gottlieb?

Old Hilse. No, he's going' to do no such thing.

Luise. [*Comes into the entry-room, calls.*] What are you puttin' off your time with prayin' hypocrites like them for? Come quick to where you're wanted! Quick! Father Baumert, run all you can! The Major's speakin' to the crowd from horseback. They're to go home. If you don't hurry up, it'll be all over.

Jaeger [*as he goes out*]. That's a brave husband of yours.

Luise. Where is he? I've got no husband!

[*Some of the people in the entry-room sing.*]

Once on a time a man so small,
Heigh-ho, heigh!
Set his heart on a wife so tall,
Heigh diddle-di-dum-di!

Wittig, the Smith. [*Comes downstairs, still carrying the stable pail; stops on his way through the entry-room.*] Come on! all of you that are not cowardly scoundrels!—hurrah!

[*He dashes out, followed by* Luise, Jaeger, *and others, all shouting "Hurrah!"*]

Becker. Good-bye, then, Father Hilse; we'll see each other again. [*Is going.*]

OLD HILSE. I doubt that. I've not five years to live, and that'll be the soonest you'll get out.

BECKER. [*Stops, not understanding.*] Out o' what, Father Hilse?

OLD HILSE. Out of prison—where else?

BECKER. [*Laughs wildly.*] Do you think I would mind that? There's bread to be had there anyhow. [*Goes out.*]

OLD BAUMERT. [*Has been cowering on a low stool, painfully beating his brains; he now gets up.*] It's true, Gustav, as I've had a drop too much. But for all that I know what I'm about. You think one way in this here matter; I think another. I say Becker's right: even if it ends in chains an' ropes—we'll be better off in prison than at home. You're cared for there, an' you don't need to starve. I wouldn't have joined them, Gustav, if I could have let it be; but once in a lifetime a man's got to show what he feels. [*Goes slowly toward the door.*] Good-bye, Gustav. If anything happens, mind you put in a word for me in your prayers.

[*Goes out.*]

[*The rioters are now all gone. The entry-room gradually fills again with curious onlookers from the different rooms of the house.* OLD HILSE *knots at his web.* GOTTLIEB *has taken an axe from behind the stove and is unconsciously feeling its edge. He and the old man are slightly agitated. The hum and roar of a great crowd penetrate into the room.*]

MOTHER HILSE. The very boards is shakin', father—what's going on? What's goin' to happen to us?

[*Pause.*]

OLD HILSE. Gottlieb!

GOTTLIEB. What is it?

OLD HILSE. Let that axe alone.

GOTTLIEB. Who's to split the wood, then?

[*He leans the axe against the stove.*]

[*Pause.*]

MOTHER HILSE. Gottlieb, you listen to what father says to you.

[*Some one sings outside the window.*]

Our little man does all that he can,
Heigh-ho, heigh!
At home he cleans the pots an' the pan,
Heigh diddle-di-dum-di!

[*Passes on.*]

GOTTLIEB. [*Jumps up, shakes his clenched fist at the window.*] Brute that you are, would you drive me crazy?

[*A volley of musketry is heard.*]

MOTHER HILSE. [*Starts and trembles.*] Good Lord! is that thunder again?

OLD HILSE [*instinctively folding his hands*]. Oh, our Father in heaven! defend the poor weavers, protect my poor brothers!

[*A short pause ensues.*]

OLD HILSE. [*To himself, painfully agitated.*] There's blood flowing now.

GOTTLIEB. [*Had started up and grasped the axe when the shooting was heard; deathly pale, almost beside himself with excitement.*] And am I to lie to heel like a dog still?

A GIRL. [*Calls from the entry-room.*] Father Hilse, Father Hilse! get away from the window. A bullet's just flown in at ours upstairs. [*Disappears.*]

MIELCHEN. [*Puts her head in the window, laughing.*] Gran'father, gran'father, they've shot with their guns. Two or three's been knocked down, an' one of them's turnin' round and round like a top, an' one's twistin' himself like a sparrow when its head's being pulled off. An' oh, if you saw all the blood that came pourin'—! [*Disappears.*]

A WEAVER'S WIFE. Yes, there's two or three'll never get up again.

AN OLD WEAVER [*in the entry-room*]. Look out! They're goin' to make a rush on the soldiers.

A SECOND WEAVER [*wildly*]. Look, look, look at the women! —skirts up, an' spittin' in the soldiers' faces already!

A Weaver's Wife. [*Calls in.*] Gottlieb, look at your wife. She's more pluck in her than you. She's jumpin' about in front o' the bay'nets as if she was dancin' to music.

[*Four men carry a wounded rioter through the entry-room. Silence, which is broken by some one saying in a distinct voice, "It's Weaver Ulbrich." Once more silence for a few seconds, when the same voice is heard again: "It's all over with him; he's got a bullet in his ear." The men are heard climbing the wooden stair. Sudden shouting outside: "Hurrah, hurrah!"*]

Voices in the Entry-Room. "Where did they get the stones from?"—"Yes, it's time you were off!"—"From the new road."—"Ta-ta, soldiers!"—"It's raining paving-stones."

[*Shrieks of terror and loud roaring outside, taken up by those in the entry-room. There is a cry of fear, and the house door is shut with a bang.*]

Voices in the Entry-Room. "They're loading again."—"They'll fire another volley this minute."—"Father Hilse, get away from that window."

Gottlieb. [*Clutches the axe.*] What! are we mad dogs? Are we to eat powder an' shot now instead of bread? [*Hesitating an instant: to the old man.*] Would you have me sit here an' see my wife shot? Never! [*As he rushes out.*] Look out! I'm coming!

Old Hilse. Gottlieb, Gottlieb!

Mother Hilse. Where's Gottlieb gone?

Old Hilse. He's gone to the devil.

Voices from the Entry-Room. Go away from the window, Father Hilse.

Old Hilse. Not I! Not if you all go crazy together! [*To* Mother Hilse, *with rapt excitement.*] My heavenly Father has placed me here. Isn't that so, mother? Here we'll sit, an' do our bounden duty—ay, though the snow was to go on fire. [*He begins to weave.*]

[*Rattle of another volley.* Old Hilse *mortally wounded, starts to his feet and then falls forward over the loom.*

At the same moment loud shouting of "Hurrah!" is heard. The people who till now have been standing in the entry-room dash out, joining in the cry. The old woman repeatedly asks: "Father, father, what's wrong with you?" The continued shouting dies away gradually in the distance. MIELCHEN *comes rushing in.*]

MIELCHEN. Gran'father, gran'father, they're drivin' the soldiers out of the village; they've got into Dittrich's house, an' they're doing what they did at Dreissiger's. Gran'father!

[*The child grows frightened, notices that something has happened, puts her finger in her mouth, and goes up cautiously to the dead man.*]

Gran'father!

MOTHER HILSE. Come now, father, can't you say something? You're frightenin' me.

THE LOWER DEPTHS

SCENES FROM RUSSIAN LIFE, IN FOUR ACTS

BY

MAXIM GORKI

(1902)

Translated by Edwin Hopkins

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INTRODUCTION

Gorki's picture of the dregs of Russian society has been variously entitled in English translation *The Lower Depths, Submerged, A Night's Refuge,* or *A Night's Lodging.* The Russian word *Nadnye* literally means "at the bottom." Of all the plays one can readily call to mind, *The Lower Depths* most radically violates not only the ancient classical canons of tragedy, but also the modern technique of the well-made play. It has been included here among the great world tragedies because it is a supreme example of the naturalistic drama, and because it illustrates what enthralling power a play may have in spite of its disregard of dramatic precepts and rules. In every respect it is the antithesis of such a drama as *Œdipus the King* of Sophocles.

The Lower Depths has no unity of place, time or action. Gorki was under no necessity of violating unity of place by deliberately shifting his scene to the outdoors in Act III; in fact, the play is usually produced on the stage without this change of scene. He might have gained dramatic force by selecting his characters and incidents, and concentrating the action into one night, but Gorki cares as little about dramatic economies as he does for that supposedly Golden Rule of drama, unity of action. What he is striving for is a naturalistic picture of the stream of life, which has no beginning, middle or end. Strands of action appear only to be lost in the weaving of other strands. There is, to be sure, a prominent, sordid intrigue of dramatic intensity but no central plot. There are also no central characters; all of them, in harmony with the modern formula, are of equal value, all of them are battered wrecks, who have seen better days, but now through circumstance, or inherent weakness have settled to the bottom in a filthy cellar that still bubbles with the hectic fever of instinctive life. Yet, if the drama has no dramatic structure, it may be said to have a pattern. Before the

final curtain descends each character has reviewed his past and revealed his aspirations, disappointments, and defeats. Here are the thief, the gambler, the ex-artist, the ex-aristocrat, the prostitute, the drunkard and victims of the industrial system which Gorki compares to "a huge wild beast that daily devours the skin and bones of the throng of people that enter its black jaws." There are peasants from the country who have lived a life of poverty and toil in which their rare moments of leisure are enlivened by getting drunk, and fighting, and beating one another while repeating such aphorisms as: "Beat your wife with the butt of your gun, then lean over and listen—if she still breathes she is joking and needs more blows," and "The more you beat your wife the better your soup will taste." These people of *The Lower Depths* are only the inevitable results of centuries of brutalization under the tyranny of the Czars.

But, however drunken, filthy or dissolute the Russian may have become, he will still dream about his soul, his feelings, nature and eternity, and solace himself with mournful visions of his departed past. Luka is the friendly apostle who sets them to dreaming by plying them with the doctrine of Tolstoi —non-resistance, pity, brotherly love, hope and future peace for the troubled soul. His attempts to fan into flame the small spark of divinity flickering in their souls come too late. For a moment they glow with renewed faith in the dream of rising out of the muck, but the new visions only lead them into further misfortunes. Luka, the well-meaning idealist, in reality brings not peace, but a sword. Nevertheless he reiterates the dominant note of modern tragedy, namely, universal sympathy:

"How can you abandon another so? Whatever he may have become—he still remains a human being."

TEXT OF THE PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

[*In the order in which they first speak in the play*]

A Baron, 32 *years old*

Kvaschnya, *a market woman, about* 40

Bubnoff, *a capmaker,* 45

Kleshtsch, Andrew Mitritch, *locksmith,* 40

Nastiah, 24

Anna, *wife of* Kleshtsch, 30

Sahtin, 40

An Actor, 40

Kostilioff, Michael Ivanowitch, *lodging-house keeper,* 54

Pepel, Waska, 28

Natasha, *sister of* Wassilissa, 20

Luka, *a pilgrim,* 60

Alyoschka, *a shoemaker,* 20

Wassilissa Karpovna, *wife of* Kostilioff, 26

Medviedeff, *uncle of* Wassilissa, *policeman,* 50

A Tartar, 40, *a porter*

Krivoi Zoba, 40, *a porter*

Several nameless tramps, supernumeraries

THE LOWER DEPTHS

ACT I

[*A basement-room resembling a cavern. The massive, vaulted stone ceiling is blackened with smoke, its rough plaster in places broken off. The light falls inwardly from above, through a square window on the left* (*of one facing the footlights*). *The left corner;* PEPEL'S *quarter, is separated from the rest of the room by thin partitions, against which, extending from beneath the window towards C. is* BUBNOFF'S *bunk.*

In the right corner is a great Russian stove, the rear of which is set into the wall which arches over it, the portion of the stove which extends into the room being an incline up which the personages must scramble to reach the space under the archway.

In the massive wall to the right is a door to the kitchen, in which KVASCHNYA, *the* BARON, *and* NASTIAH *live.*

Below the window, on the left, is a broad bed with dirty cotton curtains. Slightly L. C. (*adjoining* PEPEL'S *room*) *a flight of a few steps leads back to a platform, from which, to the left and behind* PEPEL'S *room, lead other steps, to an entry or hallway.*

A *door opens inwardly on this platform, while to the right another flight of stairs leads to a room R. U. E. over the stove, in which the proprietor and his family live. The balustrade is in a bad condition and a torn rug or quilt lies over it.*

Between the stove and the short flight of steps stands a broad low bench with four legs, which serves as a bunk. Another such bunk is across the front of the stove, and a third is at the right below the door to the kitchen. Near this is a

wooden block to which is secured a small anvil and vise. KLESHTSCH *sits on a smaller block, at work on a pair of old locks, into which he is fitting keys. At his feet are two bundles of keys of various sizes, strung on wire hoops, and a damaged samovar (a tea urn commonly used in Russia), a hammer and some files.*

In the middle of the room a great table, two benches, and a heavy tabouret, all unpainted and dirty. KVASCHNYA, *at the table R. cleaning a samovar, acts as housekeeper, while the* BARON *L. C. chews on a piece of black bread, and* NASTIAH *L. sits on the tabouret, her elbows on the table, her face in her hands, reading a tattered book.* ANNA, *in bed, concealed by the curtains, is frequently heard coughing.* BUBNOFF *sits, tailor fashion on his bench, measuring off on a form which he holds between his knees, the pieces of an old pair of trousers which he has ripped up, cutting out caps to the best advantage. Behind him is a smashed hatbox from which he cuts visors, stacking the perfect ones on two nails in the partition and throwing the useless ones about the room. Around him are bits of oil-cloth and scraps.*

SAHTIN, *just awakening, on the bunk before the stove, grumbles and roars. On the stove, hidden by the left springer of the arch, the* ACTOR *is heard coughing and turning.*

TIME: *Early Spring. Morning.*]

BARON. Go on. [*Desiring more of the story.*]

KVASCHNYA. Never, I tell you, my friend—take it away. I've been through it all, I want you to know. No treasure could tempt me to marry again.

[SAHTIN *grunts at this.*]

BUBNOFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] What are you grunting about?

KVASCHNYA. I, a free woman, my own boss, shall I register my name in somebody else's passport, become a man's serf, when nobody can say "that" to me now? Don't let me dream about it. I'll never do it. If he were a prince from America —I wouldn't have him.

KLESHTSCH. You lie.

KVASCHNYA. [*Turning toward him.*] Wh-at!
[*Turns back.*]

KLESHTSCH. You are lying. You are going to marry Abram.

BARON. [*Rises, takes* NASTIAH'S *book and reads the title.*] "Disastrous Love." [*Laughs.*]

NASTIAH. [*Reaches for the book.*] Here! Give it back. Now; stop your joke.

[*The* BARON *eyes her and waves the book in the air.*]

KVASCHNYA. [*To* KLESHTSCH *again.*] You lie, you red-headed billy goat; speaking to me like that, the nerve of it!

BARON. [*Gives* NASTIAH *a blow on the head with the book.*] What a silly goose you are, Nastiah.

NASTIAH. Give it here. [*Snatches the book.*]

KLESHTSCH. [*To* KVASCHNYA.] You are a great lady! . . . But just the same you'll be Abram's wife . . . That is what you want.

KVASCHNYA. Certainly. [*Spoken ironically.*] To be sure . . . What else . . . And you beating your wife half to death.

KLESHTSCH. [*Furiously.*] Hold your tongue, old slut! What's that to you?

KVASCHNYA. [*Shouting.*] Ah, ha! You can't listen to the truth!

BARON. Now, they're let loose. Nastiah,—where are you?

NASTIAH. [*Without raising her head.*] What? let me alone!

ANNA. [*Putting her head out of the bed curtains.*] It is dawning already. For Heaven's sake! Stop screaming and quarreling.

KLESHTSCH. Croaking again! [*Contemptuously.*]

ANNA. Every day that God gives, you quarrel. Let me at least die in quiet.

BUBNOFF. The noise isn't keeping you from dying.

KVASCHNYA. [*Goes to* ANNA.] Tell me, Anna dear, how have you endured such a brute?

ANNA. Let me be! Let me—

KVASCHNYA. Now, now, you poor martyr. Still no better with your breast?

BARON. It is time for us to go to market, Kvaschnya.

KVASCHNYA. Then let's go now. [*To* ANNA.] Would you like a cup of hot custard?

ANNA. I don't need it; thank you, though. Why should I still eat?

KVASCHNYA. Oh, eat! Hot food is always good. It is quieting. I will put it away for you in a cup and when your appetite comes, then eat. [*To the* BARON.] Let's go, sir. [*To* KLESHTSCH, *going around him.*] Huh! you Satan!

ANNA. [*Coughing.*] Oh, God!

BARON. [*Jostles* NASTIAH *on the nape of the neck.*] Drop it . . . you goose.

NASTIAH. [*Murmurs.*] Go on. I am not in your way.

[*Turns a page. The* BARON *whistles in derision; crosses to R. Exit into kitchen following* KVASCHNYA.]

SAHTIN. [*Gets up from his bunk.*] Who was it that beat me up yesterday?

BUBNOFF. That's all the same to you.

SAHTIN. Suppose it is. But what for?

BUBNOFF. You played cards?

SAHTIN. Played cards? Oh, so I did.

BUBNOFF. That's why.

SAHTIN. Crooks!

ACTOR. [*On the stove, thrusting his head out.*] They'll kill you once, some day.

SAHTIN. You are—a blockhead!

ACTOR. Why so?

SAHTIN. They couldn't kill me twice, could they?

ACTOR. [*After a short silence.*] I don't see it.—Why not?

KLESHTSCH. [*Turning to him.*] Crawl down off the stove and clean the place up! You're too finicky, anyhow.

ACTOR. That's none of your business. . . .

KLESHTSCH. Wait! . . . When Wassilissa comes she will show you whose business it is.

ACTOR. The devil take Wassilissa. The Baron must fix things up today, it's his turn. . . . Baron!

BARON. [*Enters R. from kitchen.*] I haven't time. I must go to market with KVASCHNYA.

ACTOR. That's nothing to me . . . Go to the devil for all I care . . . but the floor must be swept up and it's your turn. . . . Don't imagine that I will do somebody else's work.

BARON. [*Crosses to* NASTIAH.] No? Then the deuce take you! Nastengka will sweep up a little. Say! You! "Disastrous Love!" Wake up! [*Takes the book.*]

NASTIAH. [*Raising.*] What do you want? Give it here, you mischief maker. And this is a nobleman!

BARON. [*Gives the book back.*] Nastiah! Do a little bit of sweeping for me—will you?

NASTIAH. [*Goes R. Exit R. into kitchen.*] Sure, I'm crazy to.

KVASCHNYA. [*Within, to the* BARON.] Come along. They can certainly clean up without you. [*Exit* BARON *R.*] You, Actor, you must do it. You were asked to do it, so do it then. It won't break your back.

ACTOR. Now, always I—hm—I can't understand it.

[*The* BARON *enters from the kitchen carrying, by means of a yoke, two baskets containing fat jars covered with rags.*]

BARON. Pretty heavy today.

SAHTIN. You could do that without being a baron.

KVASCHNYA. [*To the* ACTOR.] See to it that you sweep up.

[*Exit to the entry L. U. E. preceded by the* BARON.]

ACTOR. [*Crawls down from the stove.*] I must not inhale dust. It injures me [*self-pityingly*]. My organism is poisoned with alcohol.

[*Sits introspectively on the bunk before the stove.*]

SAHTIN. Orgism. Orga*nism* [*derisively*].

ANNA. [*To* KLESHTSCH.] Andrew Mitritch.

KLESHTSCH. What is the matter now?

ANNA. Kvaschnya left some custard for me. Go eat it.

KLESHTSCH. [*Crosses to her.*] Won't you eat?

ANNA. I won't. Why should I eat? You—work. You must eat.

KLESHTSCH. Are you afraid? Do not despair. Perhaps you'll be better again.

ANNA. Go, eat. My heart is grieved; the end is near.

KLESHTSCH. [*Moves away.*] Oh, no; perhaps—you can get up yet—such things have happened. [*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

ACTOR. [*Loudly, as though suddenly awakened from a dream.*] Yesterday, in the dispensary, the doctor said to me: "Your organism is poisoned with alcohol, through and through."

SAHTIN. [*Laughing.*] Orgism!

ACTOR. [*With emphasis.*] Not orgism, but organism—or-gan-is-m.

SAHTIN. Sigambrer!

ACTOR. [*With a deprecating movement of the hand.*] Ah! gibberish. I tell you I'm speaking in earnest. My organism is poisoned . . . so that I shall be injured if I sweep the room . . . and breathe the dust.

SAHTIN. Microbites . . . ha!

BUBNOFF. What are you muttering about?

SAHTIN. Words . . . then there is still another word: transcendental.

BUBNOFF. What does that mean?

SAHTIN. I don't know, I've forgotten.

BUBNOFF. Why do you say it then?

SAHTIN. Just so . . . I'm tired of all our words, Bubnoff. Every one of them I've heard at least a thousand times.

ACTOR. As it says in Hamlet, "Words, words, words." A magnificent piece, "Hamlet"—I've played the grave digger.

KLESHTSCH. [*Entering R. from the kitchen.*] Will you begin to play the broom?

ACTOR. That's very little to you. [*Strikes his breast with his fist.*] "The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons. Be all my sins remembered!"

[*Within, somewhere in the distance, are heard dull cries and the shrill sound of a policeman's whistle.* KLESHTSCH *sits down to work and the rasping of his file is heard.*]

SAHTIN. I love the incomprehensible rare words. As a young man I was in the telegraph service. I have read many books.

BUBNOFF. So you have been a telegraph operator?

SAHTIN. To be sure. [*Laughs.*] Many beautiful books exist, and a lot of curious words. I was a man of education, understand that?

BUBNOFF. I've already heard so, a hundred times. What does the world care what a man was. I, for example, was a furrier, had my own place of business. My arm was quite yellow—from the dye, when I colored the furs—quite yellow, my friend, up to the elbow. I thought that my whole life long I could never wash it clean, would descend, with yellow hands, into my grave, and now look at them, they are—simply dirty, see!

SAHTIN. And what more?

BUBNOFF. Nothing more.

SAHTIN. What of it all?

BUBNOFF. I mean only . . . by way of example . . . no matter how gaily a man lays the color on, it all rubs off again . . . all off again! See!

SAHTIN. Hm! . . . My bones ache!

ACTOR. [*Sits on the bunk before the stove, his arms over his knees.*] Education is a rigmarole, the main thing is genius. I once knew an actor . . . he could scarcely read the words of his part, but he played his hero in such a way that the walls of the theatre shook with the ecstasy of the public . . .

SAHTIN. Bubnoff, give me five copecs.

BUBNOFF. I've got only two myself.

ACTOR. I say, genius, a leading man must have. Genius—believe in yourself, in your own power . . .

SAHTIN. Give me five copecs and I will believe that you

are a genius, a hero, a crocodile, a precinct captain. Kleshtsch, give me a fiver.

KLESHTSCH. Go to the devil. There are too many ragamuffins about.

SAHTIN. Stop scolding; I know you have nothing.

ANNA. Andrew Mitritch . . . It is suffocating. It is hard. . . .

KLESHTSCH. What can I do about that?

BUBNOFF. Open the door to the street floor.

KLESHTSCH. Well said! You sit on your bench and I on the ground. Let us change places and then open the door . . . I have a cold already.

BUBNOFF. [*Undisturbed.*] It is not for me. . . . Your wife asks for it.

KLESHTSCH. [*Scowling.*] A good many things are being asked for in this world.

SAHTIN. My headpiece hums. Ah, why do people always go for your head?

BUBNOFF. Not only the head, but also other parts of the body are often struck. [*Gets up.*] I must get some thread. The landlord and landlady are late today. But they might be rotting already for all I know.

[*Exit L. U. E.* ANNA *coughs.* SAHTIN, *with his hands under his neck, lies motionless.*]

ACTOR. [*Regards the atmosphere gloomily and goes to* ANNA'S *bed.*] Well, how is it? Bad?

ANNA. It is stifling. . . .

ACTOR. Shall I take you out into the entry? . . . Get up then. [*He helps the sick woman up, throws tattered shawl over her shoulders and supports her, as they totter up the steps to the landing.*] Come, now . . . be brave. I, too, am a sick man—poisoned with alcohol.

[*Enter* KOSTILIOFF, *L. U. E.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*At the door.*] Out for a promenade? What a fine couple—Jack and Jill.

ACTOR. Stand aside. Don't you see that—the sick are passing by?

KOSTILIOFF. All right, pass by, then. [*Humming the melody of a church hymn, he takes a mistrustful look about the basement, descends to the floor, leans his head to the left as if to overhear something in* PEPEL'S *room.* KLESHTSCH *claps furiously with the keys and files noisily, the proprietor giving him a black look.*] Busy scraping, eh? [*Crosses to R. F.*]

KLESHTSCH. What?

KOSTILIOFF. Busy scraping, I said . . . [*Pause.*] Hm—yes. . . . What was I going to say? [*Hastily and in a lower tone.*] Wasn't my wife there?

KLESHTSCH. Haven't seen her . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Guardedly approaches the door of* PEPEL'S *room.*] How much space you take for your two rubles a month? That bed . . . You yourself sitting everlastingly here—nyah,[1] five rubles' worth, at least. I raise you half a ruble. . . .

KLESHTSCH. Put a halter around my neck . . . and raise me a little more. You are an old man, you'll soon be rotting in your grave . . . and you think of nothing but half rubles.

KOSTILIOFF. Why should I halter you? Who would be the better for that? Live, may God bless you, be content. Yet I raise you half a ruble to buy oil for the holy lamps . . . and my offering will burn before the holy image . . . for the remission of my sins, and thine also. . . . You never think yourself of your sins, I guess, do you . . . ah, Andreuschka, what a sinful beast you are . . . your wife languishing in agony from your blows . . . nobody likes you, nobody respects you . . . your work is so grating that nobody can endure you. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Cries out.*] Do you come . . . to hack me to pieces? [SAHTIN *roars aloud.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Shudders.*] Ah . . . What is the matter with you, my friend?

[1] An expression equivalent to no or yes.

ACTOR. [*Enters from stairs L. U. E.*] I took the woman into the entry . . . put her in a chair and wrapped her up warm. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. What a good Samaritan you are. It will be rewarded. . . .

ACTOR. When?

KOSTILIOFF. In the next world, brother dear. . . . There they sit and reckon up our every word and deed.

ACTOR. Why not, for the goodness of my heart, give me some recompense here?

KOSTILIOFF. How can I do that?

ACTOR. Knock off half my debt. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Ha, ha, always having your fun, little buck, always jollying. . . . Can goodness of the heart be ever repaid with money? Goodness of the heart stands higher than all the treasures of this world. Nyah . . . and your debt—is only a debt. . . . There it stands. . . . Goodness of the heart you must bestow upon an old man without recompense. . . .

ACTOR. You are a cunning old knave. . . .

[*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

[KLESHTSCH *rises and goes upstairs, L. U. E.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] Who just sneaked out? The scrape? He is not fond of me, he, he!

SAHTIN. Who is fond of you except the devil?

KOSTILIOFF. [*Laughs quietly.*] Don't scold. I have you all so nicely . . . my dear friends, but I am fond of you all, my poor, unhappy brethren, citizens of nowhere, hapless and helpless . . . [*Suddenly brisk.*] Tell me . . . is Waska at home?

SAHTIN. Look and see for yourself.

KOSTILIOFF. [*Goes to* PEPEL'S *door, L. U., and knocks.*] Waska!

[*Enter* ACTOR *R. standing in kitchen door chewing something.*]

PEPEL. [*Within.*] Who's that?

KOSTILIOFF. Me, Waska. . . .

PEPEL. [*Within.*] What do you want? . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Stepping back.*] Open the door.

SAHTIN. [*Pretending to be oblivious.*] She is there. The moment he opens it. . . . [*The* ACTOR *chuckles to him.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Disturbed, softly.*] How, who is in there? What. . . .

SAHTIN. Hm? Are you speaking to me?

KOSTILIOFF. What did you say?

SAHTIN. Nothing at all . . . only . . . to myself . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Take good care of yourself, my friend . . . you are too waggish. [*Knocks loudly on the door.*] Wassili . . .

PEPEL. [*Opening the door.*] What are you bothering me about?

KOSTILIOFF. [*Peers into* PEPEL'S *room.*] *I* . . . you see . . . you see . . .

PEPEL. Have you brought the money?

KOSTILIOFF. I have a little business with you.

PEPEL. Have you brought the money?

KOSTILIOFF. Which money? . . . wait.

PEPEL. Money, the seven rubles for the watch, see!

KOSTILIOFF. Which watch, Waska! Ah, you . . . none of your tricks.

PEPEL. Be careful. I sold you yesterday in the presence of witnesses a watch for ten rubles . . . I got three, and now I'll take the other seven. Out with them. What are you blinking about around here . . . disturbing everybody . . . and forgetting the main thing . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Ssh! Not so quick, Waska. The watch was, indeed . . .

SAHTIN. Stolen.

KOSTILIOFF. [*Stoutly, sharply.*] I never receive stolen goods. . . . How dare you . . .

PEPEL. [*Takes him by the shoulders.*] Tell me, why did you wake me up? What do you want?

KOSTILIOFF. I . . . Nothing at all . . . I am going already . . . when you act so.

PEPEL. Go then, and bring me the money.

KOSTILIOFF. [*As he goes.*] Tough customers . . . ah! ah! [*Exit L. U. E.*]

ACTOR. Here is comedy for you!

SAHTIN. Very good, I like it. . . .

PEPEL. What did he want?

SAHTIN. [*Laughing.*] Don't you catch on? He was looking for his wife. . . . Say, why don't you finish him, Waska?

PEPEL. Would it pay to spoil my life for such stuff?

SAHTIN. Spoil your life! Naturally you must do it cleverly . . . . Then marry Wassilissa . . . and be our landlord. . . .

PEPEL. That would be nice. You, my guests, would soon guzzle up the whole place, and me in the bargain. . . . I am much too open-handed for you. [*Sits on the bunk, U.*] Yes, old devil! Waked me up out of my best sleep. . . . I was having a beautiful dream. I dreamed that I was fishing, and suddenly I caught a big trout. A trout, I tell you . . . only in dreams are there such great trout. . . . I pulled and pulled, till his gills almost snapped off . . . and just as I was finishing him with a net . . . and thinking I had him . . .

SAHTIN. 'Twasn't any trout, 'twas Wassilissa.

ACTOR. He has had her in the net a long while.

PEPEL. [*Angrily.*] Go to the devil . . . with your Wassilissa.

KLESHTSCH. [*Entering L. U. E.*] It's beastly cold outside. . . .

ACTOR. Why didn't you bring Anna back? She will freeze to death.

KLESHTSCH. Natasha had taken her along to the kitchen. . . .

ACTOR. The old scamp will chase her out. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Crosses R. D. and sits down to work.*] Natasha will soon bring her in.

SAHTIN. Wassili, five copecs.

ACTOR. Yes, five copecs, Waska, give us twenty . . .

PEPEL. If I don't hurry. . . . You'll want a whole ruble . . . there! [*Gives the* ACTOR *a coin.*]

SAHTIN. Giblartarr! There are no better men in the world than the thieves!

KLESHTSCH. They get their money easy . . . they don't work. . . .

SAHTIN. Money comes easy to many, but very few give it up easily. . . . Work, if you arrange it so that work gives me joy, then perhaps I will work too . . . perhaps! When work is a pleasure—then life is beautiful. . . . When you must work—then life is slavery. [*To* ACTOR.] Come Sardanapálus, we will go. . . .

ACTOR. Come, Nebuchadnézzar, I will get as drunk as forty thousand topers.

[*Exit both L. U. E.*]

PEPEL. [*Gapes.*] How is your wife?

KLESHTSCH. [*Pause.*] She won't last long, I guess.

PEPEL. When I sit and watch you so, I think, what good comes of all your scraping.

KLESHTSCH. What else shall I do?

PEPEL. Do nothing.

KLESHTSCH. How shall I eat?

PEPEL. Other men eat without taking so much trouble.

KLESHTSCH. Other men? You mean this ragged pack of tramps here, idlers, you call them men! I am a workingman . . . I am ashamed to look at them. I have worked from childhood on. Do you think that I shall never crawl out of this cesspool again? It is quite certain, let me work the skin off my hands, but I'll get out . . . wait until after my wife dies . . . six months in this hole . . . it seems like six years.

PEPEL. What are you complaining about? . . . we are no worse than you.

KLESHTSCH. No worse . . . people living on God's earth without honor or conscience?

PEPEL. [*In an impartial tone, cool.*] What good is honor or conscience? You can't put such things on your feet when

the snow is on the ground. Honor and conscience to those in power and authority.

BUBNOFF. [*Enters L. U. E.*] Ug-h! I'm frozen stiff.

PEPEL. Tell me, Bubnoff, have you a conscience?

BUBNOFF. What? A conscience?

PEPEL. Yes.

BUBNOFF. What use is it to me? I'm no millionaire. . . .

PEPEL. That's what I say. Honor and conscience are only for the rich—and yet Kleshtsch, here, is pulling us over the coals; we have no conscience he says . . .

BUBNOFF. Does he want to borrow some from us?

PEPEL. He has plenty of his own. . . .

BUBNOFF. Maybe you'll sell us some? No, it don't sell here. If it was broken hat-boxes, I'd buy . . . but only on credit. . . .

PEPEL. [*Instructively, to* KLESHTSCH.] You're certainly a fool, Andreuschka. You ought to hear what Sahtin says about a conscience . . . or the Baron. . . .

KLESHTSCH. I have nothing to talk to them about. . . .

PEPEL. They have more wit than you, even if they are drunks. . . .

BUBNOFF. When a clever fellow drinks, he doubles his wit.

PEPEL. Sahtin says: every man wants his neighbor to have some conscience—but for himself, he can do without it . . . and that's right.

[NATASHA *enters L. U. E., and behind her* LUKA, *with a staff in his hand, a sack on his back, and a small kettle and tea boiler at his girdle.*]

LUKA. Good day to you, honest folks.

PEPEL. [*Pulling his moustache.*] A-h, Natasha.

BUBNOFF. [*To* LUKA.] Honest were we once, as you must know, but since last spring, a year ago . . .

NATASHA. Here—a new lodger. . . .

LUKA. [*To* BUBNOFF.] It's all the same to me. I know how to respect thieves, too. Any flea, say I, may be just as

good as you or me; all are black, and all jump . . . that's the truth. Where shall I quarter myself here, my love?

NATASHA. [*Points to the kitchen door.*] Go in there . . . daddy.

LUKA. Thank you, my girl, as you say. . . . A warm corner is an old man's delight. [*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

PEPEL. What an agreeable old chap you have brought along, Natasha?

NATASHA. No matter, he is more interesting than you. [*Then to* KLESHTSCH.] Andrew, your wife is with us in the kitchen . . . come for her after a while.

KLESHTSCH. All right, I'll come.

NATASHA. Be good to her now . . . we won't have her long . . .

KLESHTSCH. I know it . . .

NATASHA. Yes, you know it . . . but that is not enough! Make it quite clear to yourself, think what it means to die . . . it is frightful. . . .

PEPEL. You see I am not afraid . . .

NATASHA. The brave are not. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Whistles.*] The thread is rotten.

PEPEL. Certainly I am not afraid, I would welcome death right now. Take a knife and strike me in the heart—not a murmur will I utter. I would meet death with joy . . . from clean hands . . . like yours.

NATASHA. [*As she goes.*] Do not say anything which is not so, Pepel.

BUBNOFF. [*Drawling.*] The thread is absolutely rotten.

NATASHA. [*From the door to the entry.*] Don't forget your wife, Andrew.

KLESHTSCH. All right. [*Exit* NATASHA.]

PEPEL. A fine girl.

BUBNOFF. None better.

PEPEL. But what has set her against me so? She alone . . . always refusing me . . . but this life will be her ruin, all the same.

BUBNOFF. It is you who will be the ruin of her.

PEPEL. I be her ruin . . . I pity her . . .

BUBNOFF. As the wolf pities the lamb.

PEPEL. You lie! I do pity her. . . . Her lot is very hard. . . . . I see that. . . .

KLESHTSCH. Just wait until Wassilissa finds you together. . . .

BUBNOFF. Yes, Wassilissa! Nobody can play any tricks on her, the fiend.

PEPEL. [*Stretches himself out on the bunk, U.*] The devil take you both, prophets.

KLESHTSCH. Wait . . . and see. . . .

LUKA. [*Within, singing.*] "In the darkness of midnight, no path can be found."

KLESHTSCH. Now he is beginning to howl. . . . [*Crosses to L. U. E.*] He too is beginning. [*Exit.*]

PEPEL. My heart is in the depths . . . why is it? We live and live and everything goes well . . . then all of a sudden . . . melancholy like a blighting frost settles upon us. Life is used up. . . .

BUBNOFF. Sad, melancholy, eh? . . .

PEPEL. Yes . . . by God.

LUKA. [*Singing.*] "No path can be found."

PEPEL. Heh, you bag of bones.

LUKA. [*Enters R.*] Do you mean me?

PEPEL. Yes, you. Cut the singing out.

LUKA. [*Crossing to C.*] Don't you like singing?

PEPEL. When singing is well sung, I enjoy it.

LUKA. Then I do not sing well?

PEPEL. That's about right.

LUKA. Too bad, and I thought that I sang beautifully. So it always goes. You think to yourself, I have done that well, but the public is not pleased. . . .

PEPEL. [*Laughs.*] You are right, there.

BUBNOFF. Ump! roaring again, and just now you said life was so sad, melancholy.

PEPEL. What have you to say about it, old raven? . . .

LUKA. Who is despondent?

PEPEL. I . . .

[*The* BARON *enters L. U. E.*]

LUKA. So, and there—in the kitchen sits a girl reading a book and crying; upon my word! Her tears flowing . . . I asked her, what troubles you, my love—eh? And she said: It is so pitiful. . . . Whom do you pity then? I asked. . . . See, here in the book, the people, said she . . . And that is how she passes her time to drive away despondency, it appears. . . .

BARON. She is a fool.

PEPEL. Have you had your tea, Baron? [*An invitation.*]

BARON. Tea, yes . . . anything more?

PEPEL. Shall I stand for a bottle of rum, eh, that's right.

BARON. Of course . . . what more?

PEPEL. Let me ask you to stand on all fours and bark like a dog.

BARON. Blockhead; are you a Crœsus? Or are you drunk?

PEPEL. That's right, bark away. I shall enjoy it. . . . You are a gentleman. . . . There was a time once when you did not take us for human beings even . . . and so on . . . and so on.

BARON. Well, and what more?

PEPEL. What more? I'll let you bark now. You'll bark, won't you?

BARON. I have no objection on my own account . . . booby. How can it be such fun for you . . . When I know myself that I am sunk deeper even than you. . . . Had you once dared you ought to have tried to get me on all fours when I was above you.

BUBNOFF. You are right.

LUKA. So I say too, you are right.

BUBNOFF. What has been has been. Nothing is left but trash . . . we are not dukes here . . . the trappings are gone . . . only the bare man remains. . . .

LUKA. All are alike, know that. . . . Were you once a baron, my friend?

BARON. What's that you say? Who are you, sepulchre?

LUKA. [*Laughs.*] An earl I have seen already and a prince . . . too . . . But now for the first time, a baron, and a seedy one . . .

PEPEL. [*Laughs.*] Ha, ha, ha, I blush for you, Baron.

BARON. Don't be an idiot, Wassili. . . .

LUKA. Yes, yes, my friends. When I look around me . . . this life here . . . ah!

BUBNOFF. This life, . . . why, this life here would make any man howl, from break-o'-day on, like a starving owl.

BARON. To be sure, we have all seen better days. I for example . . . On waking up I used to drink my coffee in bed . . . coffee with cream . . . that's right.

LUKA. And you are still a man. No matter what somersaults you turn before us, as a man you were born and as a man you must die. The more I look about myself, the more I contemplate mankind, the more interesting he grows . . . poorer and poorer he sinks and higher and higher his aspirations mount . . . obstinacy.

BARON. Tell me, old man . . . exactly who you are . . . where do you come from?

LUKA. Who? I?

BARON. Are you a pilgrim?

LUKA. We are all pilgrims here on this earth. . . . It has been said, even, I am told, that our earth is only a pilgrimage to Heaven's gate. . . .

BARON. It is so, but tell me . . . have you a passport?

LUKA. [*Hesitatingly.*] Who are you? A detective?

PEPEL. [*Briskly.*] Well said, old man! Ha, my lord, that went home!

BUBNOFF. He gets what is coming to him. . . .

BARON. [*Disconcerted.*] Well! well! I am only joking, old man. I've no papers, myself.

BUBNOFF. You lie!

BARON. That is to say . . . I have papers . . . but they're of no use.

LUKA. So it is with all pen scratches . . . they're of no use. . . .

PEPEL. Baron! Come have one, for the sake of thirst. . . .

BARON. I'm with you. Bye-bye, see you again, old chap. . . . You're a sly dog. . . .

LUKA. It may be true, my friend.

PEPEL. [*At the door L. U. E.*] Are you coming?

[*Exit followed quickly by the* BARON.]

LUKA. Has the man really been a baron?

BUBNOFF. Who knows? He has been a nobleman, that is certain. Even now his former air shows through. The manner clings . . .

LUKA. Breeding is like the smallpox: The man recovers, but the pits remain.

BUBNOFF. But otherwise he is a good fellow . . . except that sometimes he is overbearing. . . . As he was about your passport. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. [*Enters L. U. E. drunk, an accordeon under his arm. He whistles.*] Hey, there, neighbors.

BUBNOFF. What are you howling about?

ALYOSCHKA. Excuse me, please . . . pass it over. I am a cozy boy. . . .

BUBNOFF. Broken out again?

ALYOSCHKA. Why not? Police captain Medviskin has just chased me off his beat. "Take your stand out of the street," says he. No, no, I am still a youth of good temperament . . . the boss was jawing at me too . . . bah, what do I care for bosses . . . bah, everything is all a mistake, should a tank be boss . . . I am a man, who . . . never a wish have . . . has . . . I want nothing . . . that settles it . . . now, take me . . . for one ruble and twenty copecs you can have me . . . and I want ab-solt-ly nothing. [NASTIAH *enters R. from kitchen.*] Offer me a million—and I will not take it. And that whiskey barrel, to be boss over me, a good man, no better than—it don't go. I'll not stand for it.

[NASTIAH *remains standing at the door, shaking her head at the spectacle of* ALYOSCHKA.]

LUKA. [*Good-naturedly.*] Ah, boy . . . you can't unravel it.

BUBNOFF. There you have human folly.

ALYOSCHKA. [*Lies down on the floor.*] Now, eat me up. Costs nothing. I am a desperado. You just tell me, am I worse than the others? How am I worse? Just think. Medviskin said: "Don't show yourself on the street, or else I'll give you one in the snout." But I'll go . . . I'll lie down crosswise in the street, let them choke me. I want ab-solt-ly nothing. . . . [*Rises.*]

NASTIAH. Wretch . . . so young and putting on such airs. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. [*Sees her and kneels.*] My lady, my fräulein, mamsell! Parlez français . . . price current . . . I am jagging.

NASTIAH. [*Whispers loudly.*] Wassilissa.

[*Sees her coming.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Opens door at head of stairs R. U. E. to* ALYOSCHKA.] Here again, . . . already?

ALYOSCHKA. Good morning. Please, come down.

WASSILISSA. Didn't I tell you, you pup, not to show yourself here again? [*Descends.*]

ALYOSCHKA. Wassilissa Karpovna—if you please, I'll play you a funeral march.

WASSILISSA. [*Pushes him on the shoulder.*] Get out!

ALYOSCHKA. [*Shuffles to the door, L. U. E.*] No, I won't wait. First listen to the funeral march. . . . I've just learned it . . . new music . . . wait a minute . . . you mustn't act so.

WASSILISSA. I will show you how I must act . . . I'll put the whole street on your track, you damned heathen . . . so, telling folks on me. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. [*Runs out L. U. E.*] No, I am already gone. [*Exit.*]

WASSILISSA. [*To* BUBNOFF.] See to it that he does not set foot in here again, you hear?

BUBNOFF. I'm not your watchman.

WASSILISSA. No, but you are a dead beat. How much do you owe me?

BUBNOFF. [*Calmly.*] I haven't counted it up. . . .

WASSILISSA. Look out or I'll count it up.

ALYOSCHKA. [*Opens the door and cries.*] Wassilissa Karpovna, I am not afraid of you . . . I am not afraid.

[*He hides behind a cloth which hangs over the balustrade and* LUKA *laughs.*]

WASSILISSA. And who are you?

LUKA. A pilgrim, a mere wanderer. I go from place to place. . . .

WASSILISSA. Will you stay over night . . . or for good?

LUKA. I will see. [ALYOSCHKA *slips into the kitchen.*]

WASSILISSA. Your passport.

LUKA. You may have it.

WASSILISSA. Give it to me, then.

LUKA. I'll get it presently . . . I'll drag it to your room. . . .

WASSILISSA. A pilgrim—You look it; say a vagabond . . . that sounds more like the truth. . . .

LUKA. [*Sighs.*] You are not very hospitable, mother.

[WASSILISSA *goes to* PEPEL'S *door.*]

ALYOSCHKA. [*Whispers, from the kitchen.*] Has she gone? . . . hm.

WASSILISSA. [*Turns on him.*] Are you still there?

[ALYOSCHKA *disappears into the kitchen, whistling.* NASTIAH *and* LUKA *laugh.*]

BUBNOFF. [*To* WASSILISSA.] He is not there. . . .

WASSILISSA. Why?

BUBNOFF. Waska.

[ALYOSCHKA *slips around to the stairs, exit L. U. E.*]

WASSILISSA. Have I asked you for him?

BUBNOFF. I can see that you are looking into every corner.

WASSILISSA. I am looking after things, do you understand.

Why have you not swept up? How often have I told you that you must keep the place clean?

BUBNOFF. It's the actor's turn today. . . .

WASSILISSA. It makes no difference to me whose turn it is. When the Health Department people come and fine me, I'll have you thrown out. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Calmly.*] And what will you live on, in that case?

WASSILISSA. See that not a speck of dust is left. [*Goes to the kitchen door to* NASTIAH.] And what are you standing around like a post for? What are you gawking about? Sweep up! Have you not seen . . . Natalya? Has she been here?

NASTIAH. I don't know . . . I haven't seen her.

WASSILISSA. Bubnoff, was my sister here?

BUBNOFF. Certainly. She brought the old man.

WASSILISSA. And he, was he in his room?

BUBNOFF. Wassili . . . to be sure . . . She was talking with Kleshtsch . . . Natalya. . . .

WASSILISSA. I did not ask you who she was talking with. . . . Dirt everywhere, a foot thick. Ah, you pigs. See that you clean up . . . do you hear me? [*Exit quickly R. U. E.*]

BUBNOFF. What a nasty temper that woman has.

LUKA. A brutal wife.

NASTIAH. This life would brutalize anybody. And tied to such a husband—how can she bear that?

BUBNOFF. She does not feel tied, so very tight. . . .

LUKA. Is she always . . . so biting?

BUBNOFF. Always . . . she was looking for her lover, you see, and that dismayed her.

LUKA. Um, so that's the trouble . . . ah, yes, how many different people there are here on this earth go bossing around . . . and all trying to lord it over the rest, but in spite of it all bringing no cleanness about.

BUBNOFF. They try, indeed, to bring order about, but the wit is lacking . . . which means, that we must finally clean up . . . Nastiah . . . won't you do it? . . .

NASTIAH. Certainly! Am I your chambermaid? [*She remains silent for a time.*] I'll get drunk today . . . soaked full. [*Motion of her hand to her chin.*]

BUBNOFF. Good business.

LUKA. What are you going to get drunk for, my daughter? You were crying a moment ago, and now you promise to get drunk. . . .

NASTIAH. [*Defiantly.*] And when I have gotten drunk, I will cry again . . . that's all. . . .

BUBNOFF. But it's not much.

LUKA. For what reason, tell me? Everything has a cause, even the smallest pimple in the face.

[NASTIAH *is silent, shaking her head.*]

LUKA. Aye, aye, such is man . . . that's the way with people, what will become of them? I will sweep up myself. Where do you keep the broom?

BUBNOFF. In the entry, behind the door. [*Exit* LUKA *L. U. E.*] Tell me, Nastenka.

NASTIAH. [*Sits R. U. before stove.*] Um.

BUBNOFF. What has Wassilissa got against Alyoschka, so much?

NASTIAH. He has told everybody that Waska don't like her any more . . . is tired of her, is going to give her up, for Natasha interests him . . . I am going to pull out and find another place. . . .

BUBNOFF. Why so?

NASTIAH. I am tired of it. I am in the way . . . superfluous.

BUBNOFF. [*Thoughtfully.*] Where wouldn't you be superfluous? Everybody here on earth is superfluous. . . .

[NASTIAH *shakes her head, rises and goes quietly upstairs R. U. E.*]

[MEDVIEDEFF *enters L. U. E. followed by* LUKA *with the broom.*]

MEDVIEDEFF. [*To* LUKA.] I don't remember having seen you.

LUKA. And the rest, you've seen them. Do you know everybody?

MEDVIEDEFF. Along my beat I must know everybody—and I don't know you. . . .

LUKA. You would, if your beat included the whole world, but there is a small corner which has been left off. [*Exit R.*]

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Crossing to* BUBNOFF *L.*] That's right. My beat is not large . . . but the work is worse than in many bigger ones. Just as I came off duty I had to take that young cobbler Alyoschka to the station house. The rascal was sprawled out on his back in the middle of the street, if you can believe it, playing his accordeon and bellowin: "I want for nothing, I wish for nothing," and wagons coming both ways and traffic everywhere. . . . He could easily have been run over, or something else happen . . . rattlebrain. . . . Of course I locked him up . . . he is a little too fresh.

BUBNOFF. Come around tonight . . . We'll have a game of checkers.

MEDVIEDEFF. I'll come . . . hm, yes . . . but how is it about Waska?

BUBNOFF. All right . . . . Same old thing. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Still alive?

BUBNOFF. Why not, his life is worth living.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Doubtfully.*] So . . . has he? [LUKA *enters R. from kitchen, and exit L. U. E., a bucket to his hand.*] Hm—yes . . . there is a rumor about . . . Waska . . . haven't you heard?

BUBNOFF. I've heard lots of things.

MEDVIEDEFF. Something about Wassilissa, he . . . have you not noticed?

BUBNOFF. What?

MEDVIEDEFF. Why . . . in general . . . you know all about it but don't like to say so . . . it is well known . . . [*strongly*] don't lie, my friend!

BUBNOFF. Why should I lie?

MEDVIEDEFF. I thought . . . ah, the curs . . . they say, in short that Waska with Wassilissa . . . so to speak . . .

nyah, what do I care? I am not her father, but only . . . her uncle. . . . It can't hurt me if they can't laugh at me. [KVASCHNYA *enters L. U. E.*] A bad lot . . . ah, you have come. . . .

KVASCHNYA. My dear captain. Just think, Bubnoff, he proposed to me again at the market. . . .

BUBNOFF. What of it . . . Why do you put him off? He has money, and is a pretty hearty lover, even yet. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. I, . . . to be sure.

KVASCHNYA. Ah, you old gray stud-horse. No, don't come near. That foolishness happens to me only once in a lifetime, and I've been through it already. Marriage, for a woman, is like jumping into the river in winter; once she's done it, she remembers it all her life.

MEDVIEDEFF. Wait . . . the husbands are not all the same. . . .

KVASCHNYA. But I always remain the same. When my dear husband—when the devil took him—when he became a carcass, damn his ghost, I did not leave the house the whole day for joy; I sat there all alone and could scarcely believe my happiness.

MEDVIEDEFF. Why did you allow your husband to beat you? If you had gone to the police. . . .

KVASCHNYA. Police! I complained to God for eight years . . . and even God couldn't do anything.

MEDVIEDEFF. But it is illegal now to beat wives. . . . Law and order are now enforced. . . . No man dare beat anybody now, except for the sake of law and order. . . . Wife beating happens only in lawless places. . . .

LUKA. [*Leads* ANNA *in, L. U. E.*] Now, look out . . . now we've crawled down . . . ah, you poor child . . . How could you go around alone so, in your condition? Where is your bed?

ANNA. [*Draws toward L. D.*] Thank you, daddy.

KVASCHNYA. There you have a married woman . . . look at her.

LUKA. Such a poor, weak thing . . . creeping about quite

alone there up in the entry, clinging to the walls—moaning without cease . . . why did you allow her to go out alone?

KVASCHNYA. We did not notice it—pardon me, grandfather. Her lady in waiting has probably gone for a stroll. . . .

LUKA. So you laugh. . . . How can you abandon another so? Whatever he may have become—he still remains a human being.

MEDVIEDEFF. This ought to be investigated. If she dies suddenly? We shall be mixed up in it. Give her every attention.

LUKA. Quite right, Mr. Captain. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Hm . . . yes . . . you may say so . . . though I'm not a captain yet. . . .

LUKA. Is it possible? But we should conclude from your appearance that you are a true hero.

[*From above a noise, the stamping of feet and smothered cries.*]

MEDVIEDEFF. Not quite yet—looks like a row.

BUBNOFF. It sounds like one. . . .

KVASCHNYA. I'll go see.

MEDVIEDEFF. And I've got to go too . . . ah, the service! Why should people be pulled apart when they brawl? They finally quit fighting of their own accord . . . when they are tired of thumping each other . . . the best thing to do is to let them get their bellies full of fighting . . . then they don't row so often . . . they aren't in shape to. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Gets off his bench.*] You must lay your plan before the authorities. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Throws open the door L. U. E. and cries.*] Abram . . . come . . . quick . . . Wassilissa is killing Natasha . . . come . . . come!

[KVASCHNYA, MEDVIEDEFF, BUBNOFF *run to the entry, L. U. E., and* LUKA *looks after them, shaking his head.*]

ANNA. Ah, God . . . the poor Natashenka!

LUKA. Who is brawling there?

ANNA. Our landlady . . . the two sisters . . .

LUKA. [*Approaches* ANNA.] Over heirlooms.

ANNA. Both are well fed . . . both are healthy. . . .

LUKA. And you . . . what is your name?

ANNA. My name is Anna. . . . When I look at you . . . you are so much like my father, just like my own dear father . . . you, too, are so kind and tender. . . .

LUKA. Because they have knocked me about the world so much, that is why I am tender. [*Chuckles to himself.*]

ACT II

[*The same scene. Evening.* SAHTIN, *the* BARON, KRIVOI ZOBA *and the* TARTAR *are sitting on the bunk before the stove, playing cards.* KLESHTSCH *and the* ACTOR *are watching the game.* BUBNOFF *on his bench is playing Parti-Dame with* MEDVIEDEFF. LUKA *is sitting on the tabouret at* ANNA'S *bed. The room is lit by two lamps, one hanging on the wall over the card players on the right and the other above* BUBNOFF'S *bench.*]

TARTAR. I'll play one more game . . . and then I quit. . . .

BUBNOFF. Krivoi Zoba! A song. [*He sings.*] "Though still the sun goes up and down."

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Falling in.*] "No gleam can pierce to me in here. . . ."

TARTAR. [*To* SAHTIN.] Shuffle the cards, but no crooked business. We already know what a swindler you are.

BUBNOFF *and* KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Sing together.*] "By day and night my guards stand watch—a—ach,
My prison window always near. . . ."

ANNA. Illness and blows. . . . I have endured . . . they have been my lot . . . my whole life long.

LUKA. Ah, you poor child! Do not grieve.

MEDVIEDEFF. What nerve! Be careful!

BUBNOFF. Ah, ha! So . . . and so, and so . . .

[*Throws down card after card.*]

TARTAR. [*Threatens* SAHTIN *with his fist.*] What are you hiding the cards for! I saw you . . . you.

KRIVOI ZOBA. Let him go, Hassan. They're bound to cheat us, one way or another. . . . Sing some more, Bubnoff.

ANNA. I cannot remember to have ever had enough to eat . . . with trembling and fear . . . have I eaten every piece of bread. . . . I have trembled and constantly feared . . . lest I eat more than my share. . . . My whole life long have I gone in rags . . . my whole ill-fated life. . . . Why should this have been?

LUKA. Ah, you poor child! You are tired? It will soon be right!

ACTOR. [*To* KRIVOI ZOBA.] Play the jack . . . the jack, damn it.

BARON. And we have the king!

KLESHTSCH. These cards will always win.

SAHTIN. So . . . they will.

MEDVIEDEFF. A queen!

BUBNOFF. Another . . . there!

ANNA. I am dying. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*To the* TARTAR.] There—look out! Throw the cards down, prince, stop playing.

ACTOR. Don't you think he knows what to do?

BARON. Be careful, Andrejuschka, that I don't throw you out of the house.

TARTAR. Again, I say. The pitcher goes to the well, then it breaks . . . the same with me. . . .

[KLESHTSCH *shakes his head and goes behind* BUBNOFF.]

ANNA. I am always thinking to myself: My Saviour . . . shall I there too . . . in that world . . . endure such tortures?

LUKA. No! Never! . . . You will suffer nothing. Lie per-

fectly still . . . and have no fear. You shall find peace there! Be patient yet a little while. . . . We must all suffer, my love. . . . Every one endures life in his own way.

[*He rises and goes hastily into the kitchen R.*]

BUBNOFF. "Spy on, with the might of your eyes, forever."

KRIVOI ZOBA. "On freedom still my thoughts shall dwell. . . ."

TOGETHER. "I cannot spring these chains and locks—a —ach. . . .
Nor fly the walls of this cold cell. . . ."

TARTAR. Stop! He has pushed a card up his sleeve.

BARON. [*Confused.*] No, where else then?

ACTOR. [*Convincingly.*] You have made a mistake, prince! It's not to be thought of. . . .

TARTAR. I saw it! Cheats! I play no more!

SAHTIN. [*Throwing the cards together.*] Then go your way, Hassan. . . . You know that we are cheats—so why did you play with us?

BARON. He's lost forty copecs, you'd think from the row that he'd lost three hundred. And this is a prince!

TARTAR. [*Violently.*] Everybody must play fair!

SAHTIN. But tell me why?

TARTAR. What does "why" mean?

SAHTIN. Just so . . . why?

TARTAR. Um, you don't know?

SAHTIN. I don't know, do you?

[*The* TARTAR *spits angrily, all laugh at him.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Cheerfully.*] You are a comical owl, Hassan. Think it over. If they lived honestly they would starve in three days. . . .

TARTAR. What's that to me? People must live honestly.

KRIVOI ZOBA. Same old story, I'd rather have a drink of tea . . . cut loose, Bubnoff.

BUBNOFF. "Alas, these heavy chains of iron, this armed patrol on ceaseless guard. . . ."

KRIVOI ZOBA. Come, Hassan. [*Exit singing.*] "No, nevermore shall I break through."

[*The* TARTAR *threatens the* BARON *with his fist, and then follows his comrade. Exit R.*]

SAHTIN. [*To the* BARON, *laughing.*] Nyah, your worship, you've launched us triumphantly into the mire. You, an educated man, and can't handle cards. . . .

BARON. [*Throwing up his hands.*] The devil knows how the cards should be handled.

ACTOR. No genius, no self-confidence . . . without that you'll never be any good. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. I have a queen, and you have two, hm, yes.

BUBNOFF. One is enough, if well played . . . your play.

KLESHTSCH. The game is lost, Abram Ivanitsch.

MEDVIEDEFF. That is none of your business—understand? Hold your tongue. . . .

SAHTIN. Fifty-three copecs won. . . .

ACTOR. The three copecs are for me . . . though what do I want with three copecs?

LUKA. [*Entering from kitchen R.*] You soaked the Tartar dry. Are you going for some?

BARON. Come with us!

SAHTIN. I'd just like to see you after you've put a couple of dozen away. . . .

LUKA. Surely I wouldn't look better than I do sober. . . .

ACTOR. Come, old fellow . . . I will declaim for you a pair of pretty couplets. . . .

LUKA. Couplets? What are they?

ACTOR. Verses, don't you understand. . . .

LUKA. Verses, for me . . . poems? What do I want them for?

ACTOR. Ah, they are so comical . . . yet sometimes so sad. . . .

SAHTIN. Are you coming, couplet singer?

[*Exit L. U. E. with the* BARON.]

ACTOR. I will catch up with you. [*To* LUKA.] There is,

old man, for example, a poem beginning . . . I have completely forgotten it . . . [*Rubs his forehead.*]

BUBNOFF. Your queen is lost . . . go.

MEDVIEDEFF. I played wrong, the devil take it.

ACTOR. In the past, while my organism was not as yet poisoned with alcohol, I had a splendid memory . . . yes, patriarch! Now . . . it is all up with me . . . time and time again with the greatest success I have recited this poem . . . to thundering applause. . . . Do you know what applause means, brother? It is the wine of wines . . . when I came out, in this posture [*assumes an attitude*] and then began . . . [*he is silent*] . . . not a word . . . have I retained. And the poem was my heart's delight. . . . Is that not frightful, patriarch? [*Clutches the air.*]

LUKA. Alas, too bad . . . when the best beloved has been forgotten. In that which man loves, he finds his soul. . . .

ACTOR. I have drowned my soul, patriarch. . . . I am a lost man. . . . And why am I lost? Because I believe in myself no more. . . . I am through. . . .

LUKA. Why so, then. Be cured! The drunkard, I have heard, can now be cured. Without expense, my brother. . . . A dispensary has been erected . . . there you may be cured without charge. They realize now, you see, that the drunkard is also a man, and they are glad when one comes to allow himself to be cured. Hurry, then, go there. . . .

ACTOR. [*Thoughtfully.*] Where to? Where is it?

LUKA. In a certain city . . . what is it called? A strange name. . . . No, I can't tell you right now . . . but listen to me: You must begin to get ready! Be abstemious! Hold yourself together, and suffer, endure thus, . . . and then you'll be cured. Begin a new life . . . is that not splendid, brother: a new life . . . now, decide . . . one, two three!

ACTOR. [*Smiling.*] A new life . . . from the start . . . that is beautiful. . . . Can it be true? A new life?—[*Laughs.*] Nyah . . . yes! I can! I can!

LUKA. Why not? Man can achieve everything . . . if he only will. . . .

ACTOR. [*Suddenly, as if awakened from a dream.*] You're a queer customer! So long! See you again. [*He whistles.*] Meantime, old man. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

ANNA. Daddy.

LUKA. What is it, little mother?

ANNA. Talk a little bit, to me. . . .

LUKA. [*Going to her.*] Gladly . . . Let us have a long chat.

[KLESHTSCH *looks around, silently goes to the bed of his wife, looks at her, gesticulates, as if about to speak.*]

LUKA. Well, brother?

KLESHTSCH. [*Whispers as if in fear.*] Nothing.

[*Goes slowly to door, L. U. E. Remains a few moments, then goes out.*]

LUKA. [*Following him with his eyes.*] Your husband seems to be oppressed.

ANNA. I cannot think of him any more.

LUKA. Has he beaten you?

ANNA. How often . . . He has brought me . . . to this.

BUBNOFF. My wife . . . had once an admirer. He played with kings and queens quite splendidly, the rascal. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Hm.

ANNA. Grandfather . . . Talk to me, my dear . . . I am lonely. . . .

LUKA. That is nothing. That may be felt before death, my dove. It means nothing, dear. Have faith. You will die, you see, and then enter into rest. Have fear of nothing more, of nothing more. It will be still, and peaceful . . . and you will lie resting there. Death subdues everything . . . he is so tender with us . . . Only in death shall rest be found, they say . . . and such is the truth, my love! Where shall rest be found here?

[PEPEL *enters L. U. E. a little drunk, dishevelled and sullen. He sits on the bunk by the kitchen door, silent and motionless.*]

ANNA. And shall there be such torture there?

LUKA. Nothing is there! Believe me, nothing! Rest alone—nothing else. They will lead you before the Master and will say: Look, oh, Master—thy servant Anna is come. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Vigorously.*] How can you know what shall be said there: have you ever heard?

[PEPEL, *at the sound of* MEDVIEDEFF'S *voice, raises his head and listens.*]

LUKA. My information is reliable, Mr. Commissioner. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Softly.*] Hm,—yes. Nyah, it is your affair . . . that means . . . but I am not a commissioner. . . .

BUBNOFF. Two birds with one stone. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Ah, you, the devil take you. . . .

LUKA. And the Master will look upon you in loving kindness and will say: "I know this Anna!" "Now," he will say, "lead her forth into Paradise. May she there find peace. . . . I know her life was wearisome . . . she is very tired . . . let her have rest, our Anna."

ANNA. Grandfather . . . you, my dear . . . if only it is so . . . if I there . . . find peace . . . and feel nothing more. . . .

LUKA. You will suffer nothing . . . nothing! Only have faith! Die joyfully, without anxiety . . . Death to us, I say unto you, is like a mother soothing her children. . . .

ANNA. But . . . perhaps . . . I will get well again?

LUKA. [*Laughing.*] For what? To fresh tortures?

ANNA. But I might still . . . live a little while . . . a very little while . . . if there is no torture beyond . . . I can afford to suffer at the end here a little more. . . .

LUKA. There shall be no more pain . . . none at all.

PEPEL. [*Rising.*] True—it may be, and may not be!

ANNA. Ah, God. . . .

LUKA. Ah, my dear boy. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Who is howling there?

PEPEL. [*Going to him.*] Me, what's the matter?

MEDVIEDEFF. People must keep quiet in here. . . . You have no cause for howling.

PEPEL. Ah . . . blockhead! And you her uncle . . . ha, ha!

LUKA. [*Whispers to* PEPEL.] Listen, boy—not so loud. A woman is dying here. . . . Her lips are covered with earth already . . . don't disturb her. . . .

PEPEL. As you say so, grandfather, I will listen to you. You are a splendid chap, pilgrim . . . you tell them famously . . . you're full of nice stories. Keep it up, brother, keep it up . . . there is so little pleasure in the world.

BUBNOFF. Is she dying for keeps?

LUKA. I guess she is not fooling.

BUBNOFF. Then we will finally be rid of that coughing . . . a great nuisance, her everlasting coughing . . . I take two. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Ah, . . . the devil take you.

PEPEL. Abram. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. I am not Abram . . . for you. . . .

PEPEL. Abrashka, tell me—is Natasha still sick?

MEDVIEDEFF. Does that concern you?

PEPEL. No, but say: did Wassilissa really beat her up so badly?

MEDVIEDEFF. And that's none of your business either . . . that's a family affair . . . who are you, anyhow, eh?

PEPEL. I may be who I am—but when it suits me, I will take your Natasha away. You will not see her again.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Interrupting his playing.*] What do you say? Whom are you talking about? My niece shall . . . ach, you thief!

PEPEL. A thief—that you have not yet caught. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. Wait! I'll soon catch you . . . in a very little while I will have you. . . .

PEPEL. Whenever it suits you . . . and then your whole nest here will be torn up. Do you think I'll hold my tongue when it comes to the coroner? There you're badly mistaken. Who incited you to theft, they will ask—who put the oppor-

tunity before you? Mischka Kostilioff and his wife. And who received the stolen goods? Mischka Kostilioff and his wife.

MEDVIEDEFF. You lie! Nobody will believe it.

PEPEL. They will quickly believe—because it is the truth. And I'll get you into the muddle too, and the rest of you, you gang of thieves—we shall soon see.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Uneasily.*] Shut up! Shut up! What have I done to you . . . you mad dog. . . .

PEPEL. What good have you done me?

LUKA. Quite right. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*To* LUKA.] What are you croaking about? What business is this of yours? This is a family affair. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*To* LUKA.] Let them have it out. . . . We two won't be haltered anyhow. . . .

LUKA. [*Softly.*] I have done no harm. I only think that if a man does not do another good—then he has done wrong.

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Who does not understand* LUKA.] Look, you. We are all acquainted here. . . . And you—who are you? [*Exit quickly L. U. E. angrily fuming.*]

LUKA. He has gone mad, Sir Cavalier . . . oho! Very peculiar, brothers, what we have here, somewhat complicated.

PEPEL. He has gone to Wassilissa, now, with it.

BUBNOFF. Don't make a fool of yourself, Wassili. Don't try to be the bravest. Bravery, my boy, is good, when you go into the woods for mushrooms. . . . It is out of place here . . . they have you by the throat . . . in a jiffy.

PEPEL. We shall see. . . . We Yaroslavs are much too sly . . . we cannot be caught with the bare hands . . . will you have a fight . . . good, then we begin it. . . .

LUKA. It would indeed, be better, boy, to go away. . . .

PEPEL. Where then? Tell me. . . .

LUKA. Go . . . to Siberia.

PEPEL. Ha! Ha! Never; I'd rather wait until they send me, at the expense of the government. . . .

LUKA. No, really, listen to me! Go there; you can make your way in Siberia . . . they need such young fellows. . . .

PEPEL. My way is already pointed out! My father spent his life in prison, and that fate is my legacy . . . when I was still a small boy they called me a thief and the son of a thief.

LUKA. A beautiful country, Siberia. A golden land. A man with strength and a clear head develops there . . . like a cucumber in a hot bed.

PEPEL. Tell me, pilgrim, why do you fabricate so ceaselessly?

LUKA. How?

PEPEL. Are you deaf? Why do you lie, I ask. . . .

LUKA. When have I lied?

PEPEL. Right straight along. . . . It is beautiful there, by your way of thinking, and beautiful here . . . which is not true. Why, then, do you lie?

LUKA. Believe me! Or go there and convince yourself. . . . You will send me thanks . . . why loiter here? And, from whence comes your eagerness for truth? Think it over; the truth is, they may make an end of you here.

PEPEL. It is all the same . . . even a halter.

LUKA. You are a strange fellow. Why will you put your head into it?

BUBNOFF. What are you two jawing about? I don't catch on. . . . What kind of truth do you want, Waska? What good would it be to you? You know the truth about yourself . . . and all the world knows it. . . .

PEPEL. Hold your snout. Don't croak. He shall tell me first . . . hear, pilgrim . . . is there a God?

[LUKA *laughs and remains silent.*]

BUBNOFF. Mankind is like chips which the storm sweeps away . . . the finished house remains, but the chips are gone.

LUKA. [*Softly.*] If you believe in him, there is a God; believe not and none exists. . . . What you believe in . . . exists . . . [PEPEL *looks silently surprised at the old man.*]

BUBNOFF. I'll have a drink of tea now . . . come with me to the ale house.

LUKA. [*To* PEPEL.] What are you staring at?

PEPEL. It means then . . . just so . . . wait.

BUBNOFF. Nyah, then I'll go alone.

[*Exit L. U. E., bumping into* WASSILISSA.]

PEPEL. Then . . . do as you . . . then you . . .

WASSILISSA. [*To* BUBNOFF.] Is Nastassja at home?

BUBNOFF. No . . . [*Exit L. U. E.*]

PEPEL. Ah . . . there she is.

WASSILISSA. [*Goes to* ANNA'S *bed.*] Is she still alive?

LUKA. Do not disturb her.

WASSILISSA. And you, what are you loafing around for?

LUKA. I can go out, if I must. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Approaching* PEPEL'S *door.*] Wassili! I have business with you . . . [LUKA *goes to the door, L. U. E., opens it, closes it noisily, then carefully climbs up the stove and conceals himself.* WASSILISSA *has entered* PEPEL'S *room. Within.*] Waska, come here.

PEPEL. I will not come . . . I will not. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Re-enters.*] What's the matter? Why are you so mad?

PEPEL. It is tiresome. . . . I am sick of the whole mess here. . . .

WASSILISSA. And me, are you sick . . . of me, too?

PEPEL. You too. . . . [WASSILISSA *pulls the shawl which is over her shoulders closely together and presses her arm against her breast. She goes to* ANNA'S *bed, looks cautiously behind the curtain, and returns to* PEPEL.] Nyah, so . . . speak. . . .

WASSILISSA. What shall I say? No one can be forced to love . . . and I should be unlike myself to beg for love . . . for your frankness many thanks. . . .

PEPEL. My frankness?

WASSILISSA. Yes, you say you are sick of me . . . or is it not true? [PEPEL *looks at her in silence. She approaches him.*] Why do you stare? Do you not know me?

PEPEL. [*With a deep breath.*] You are beautiful Waska. [WASSILISSA *puts her arm around his neck: he shakes it off with a movement of the shoulder.*] But still my heart has never belonged to you. . . . I have gone on living with you . . . but I have never truly liked you. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Softly.*] So . . . o . . . now . . . um. . . .

PEPEL. Now we have nothing more to talk about. . . . Nothing more . . . go away . . . leave me alone.

WASSILISSA. Have you found pleasure in another?

PEPEL. That is nothing to you. . . . If it were so—I would not take you along for a matchmaker. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Meaningly.*] Who knows . . . perhaps I can bring it about.

PEPEL. [*Suspiciously.*] Who with?

WASSILISSA. You know who I mean . . . don't deny it. . . . I talk straight out from the shoulder . . . [*Softly.*] I will only say . . . you have deeply wronged me . . . without provocation you have struck me a blow, as with a club . . . you always said you loved me, and . . . all of a sudden. . . .

PEPEL. All of a sudden . . . not at all. . . . I have thought so, long . . . you have no soul. . . . In a woman there should be a soul. We men are animals . . . we know nothing else . . . and men must first be taught goodness . . . and you, what good have you taught me? . . .

WASSILISSA. What has been has been. . . . I know that we cannot control the impulses of our hearts . . . if you love me no more—good . . . it is all the same to me.

PEPEL. All right, then. It is settled. We separate in friendship, without scandal . . . pleasantly!

WASSILISSA. Stop, not so quick. During the whole time that we have lived together . . . I have always hoped you would help me out of this cesspool here . . . that you would free me from my husband, from my uncle . . . from this whole life . . . and perhaps I have not loved you, Waska, at all . . . perhaps in you I love only . . . my one hope, my one dream . . . do you understand? I had hoped you would pull me out. . . .

PEPEL. You are no nail and I am no tongs . . I had thought you would finish him; with your slyness . . for you are sly and quick-witted . . . [*Sits at R. table.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Leans towards him.*] Waska, we will help each other. . . .

PEPEL. How then?

WASSILISSA. [*In a low tone, with expression.*] My sister . . . you have taken a fancy to her, I know it. . . .

PEPEL. And you knock her about so brutally on that account. I'll say this to you, Waska: don't touch her again.

WASSILISSA. Wait. Not so hotly. It can all be done quietly, in friendliness. . . . Marry her whenever you feel like it. I'll find the money, three hundred rubles. If I can get more I'll give you more. . . .

PEPEL. [*Rocks on his seat back and forth.*] Hold on . . . How do you mean that? What for?

WASSILISSA. Free me from my husband. Take that halter from my neck. . . .

PEPEL. [*Whistles.*] Oho, I se-e! You have thought it out well . . . the husband in his grave, the admirer in Siberia, and you yourself. . . .

WASSILISSA. But Waska, why Siberia? Not you yourself . . . your comrades. And even if you did do it yourself—who would know? Think . . . Natasha thine. . . . You shall have money . . . to go away . . . anywhere . . . you free me forever. . . and for my sister too; it will be a good thing for her to be away from me. I can't look at her without getting furious. . . . I hate her on your account . . . I cannot control myself . . . I give her such blows that I myself cry for pity . . . but—I strike her just the same. And I will go on with it.

PEPEL. Beast! Don't sing praises of your own cruelty.

WASSILISSA. I am not praising myself. I only speak the truth. Remember, Waska, you have already been imprisoned twice by my husband . . . when you could not satisfy his greed. . . . He sticks to me like vermin . . . for four years he has fed on me. Such a man for a husband! And Natasha dreads him too. He oppresses her and calls her a beggar. He is a poison, a rank poison for us all. . . .

PEPEL. How cleverly you contrive it all. . . .

WASSILISSA. What I have said is not contrived . . . It is quite clear to you. . . . Only a fool could not comprehend. . . .

[KOSTILIOFF *enters warily, L. U. E., and sneaks forward.*]

PEPEL. [*To* WASSILISSA.] No . . . go away!

WASSILISSA. Think it over. [*Sees her husband.*] What's this! Dogging me again?

[PEPEL *springs up and looks wildly at* KOSTILIOFF.]

KOSTILIOFF. Indeed . . . it is I . . . it is I . . . and you are quite alone here? Ah . . . ah . . . Been chatting for a spell? [*Suddenly stamps his feet and screeches aloud, to* WASSILISSA.] Waska, you baggage . . . you beggar, you deceptive carrion. [*Then frightened by his own cry which is answered only by an echoless silence.*] Have mercy on me, Lord . . . You have again led me to sin, Wassilissa . . . I search for you everywhere . . . [*Squeakingly.*] It is time to go to bed. Have you forgot to fill the holy lamp? . . . ah, you beggar, you swine!

[*Waves his hands tremblingly in her face.* WASSILISSA *goes slowly to the door, L. U. E., and looks back at* PEPEL.]

PEPEL. [*To* KOSTILIOFF.] You! Go your own way. Get out. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Cries.*] I am the master here: Get out yourself, understand? Thief!

PEPEL. [*Sternly.*] Go your own way, Mischka. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Be careful! Or else I'll . . .

[PEPEL *seizes him by the collar and shakes him. A noise of turning and yawning is heard on the stove.* PEPEL *loosens* KOSTILIOFF, *who, crying loudly, goes out R. U. E. up the stairs.*]

PEPEL. [*Jumps on bunk before stove.*] Who is there? Who is on the stove?

LUKA. [*Poking his head out.*] What?

PEPEL. Is it you?

LUKA. [*Composedly.*] I . . . I myself . . . Who else would it be? . . . Ah, my God!

PEPEL. [*Closes door L. U. E., looks for key, but does not find it.*] The devil . . . crawl down, pilgrim.

LUKA. All right . . . I'll crawl down. . . .

PEPEL. [*Roughly.*[Why did you climb up on the stove?

LUKA. Where should I go?

PEPEL. Why didn't you go out into the entry?

LUKA. Too cold, little brother . . . I am an old man. . . .

PEPEL. Did you hear?

LUKA. Without any trouble. Why not? I am not deaf. Ah, my boy, you are lucky, truly lucky.

PEPEL. [*Mistrustfully.*] I am lucky? How so?

LUKA. Because . . . I climbed up on the stove . . . that was your luck. . . .

PEPEL. Why did you move about?

LUKA. Because I feel hot . . . luckily for you, my orphan . . . and then I thought: if the boy does not lose his head . . . and strangle the old man. . . .

PEPEL. Yes, I might easily have done it . . I hate him. . .

LUKA. It would not have been any wonder . . . such things happen every day.

PEPEL. [*Laughing.*] Mm. . . . Have you yourself not done something of the kind some time?

LUKA. Listen, my boy, to what I tell you: this woman, keep well away from her. At no cost let her approach . . . She will soon get her husband out of the way more cleverly than you could ever manage it. Don't listen to her, this offspring of Satan! Look at me: not a hair left on my head . . . and why? The women, and no other reason. . . . I have known, perhaps more women than I have had hairs on my head . . . and this Wassilissa . . . is worse than the pest. . . .

PEPEL. I don't know . . . whether to thank you . . . or, are you too . . .

LUKA. Say no more . . . Listen. If there is a girl, take the one you like best—take her by the hand and go away together; quite away, a long way off. . . .

PEPEL. [*Gloomily.*] We cannot know each other: who is good, who is bad. . . . Nothing certain is known to us. . . .

LUKA. Of what importance can that be? Man's ways vary . . . following the different desires of his heart; so he lives, good today, bad tomorrow. And if you love the girl, then pull out, settle it. Or go alone. You are young, you have still time enough to be enmeshed by a woman.

PEPEL. [*Takes him by the shoulder.*] No, but say—why do you tell me all this? . . .

LUKA. Hold on. Let me go . . . I must look after Anna. . . . Her throat is rattling. [*He goes to* ANNA'S *bed, strikes the curtain back, looks at the prostrate form and touches it with his hand.* PEPEL, *uneasy and depressed, follows him.*] Lord Jesus Christ, All Powerful! receive in peace the soul of this newcomer, thy servant Anna. . . .

PEPEL. [*Whispers.*] Is she dead?

[*Elevates himself to his full height and looks without approaching.*]

LUKA. [*Whispering.*] Her misery is ended. And where is her husband?

PEPEL. In the barroom—of course.

LUKA. He must be told. . . .

PEPEL. [*Shrinking.*] I do not love the dead.

LUKA. [*Goes to the door, L. U. E.*] Why should we love the dead? We must love the living . . . the living. . . .

PEPEL. I'll go with you.

LUKA. Are you afraid?

PEPEL. I love them not. . . .

[*Exit hastily, with* LUKA, *L. U. E. The stage remains empty for a few moments. Behind the door, L. U. E., is heard a dull confused, unusual sound.*]

[*Enter the* ACTOR, *L. U. E. He remains standing on the platform, his hand on the door jamb, and cries.*]

ACTOR. Old man! Luka! Heh, where do you hide? Now I remember. Listen.

[*Tremblingly takes two steps forward, puts himself in an attitude and declaims.*]

And if humanity to holy truth
No path by searching finds,
Then all the world shall praise the fool,
Who spins a dream to mesh their minds.

[NATASHA *appears behind the* ACTOR *in the door.*]

[*He continues.*] Old man . . . listen!
And if the sun tomorrow shall forget
Upon the earth his light to stream,
Then all the world shall hail the fool,
With his illuminating red-gold dream.

NATASHA. [*Laughs.*] Look at the scare-crow. Maybe he has had one or two. . . .

ACTOR. [*Turns to her.*] A-ah, it is you! And where is our patriarch? Our loving, kind-hearted pilgrim. . . . There is nobody . . . at home. . . . Natasha, farewell, farewell.

NATASHA. [*Approaches him.*] You have just greeted me, and now you say farewell.

ACTOR. [*Steps in her way.*] I shall go. . . . I shall travel . . . when, soon as spring comes, I shall be far away.

NATASHA. Let me by. . . . Where shall you travel then?

ACTOR. I shall go to that city . . . I shall be cured. . . . You must leave here, too . . . Ophelia . . . get thee to a nunnery. . . . There is, you know, a hospital for organisms . . . for hard drinkers, so to speak . . . a splendid hospital . . . all marble . . . marble floors . . . light . . . cleanliness . . . good board—all free of charge! And marble floors, truly. I shall find it, this city, I'll be myself again. . . . Begin a new life. . . . I am on the way to regeneration . . . as King Lear said! Do you know too, Natasha . . . what my stage name is? Svertchkoff-Savolszhinski I'm called . . . nobody knows that here, nobody . . . here I am nameless . . . realize, if you can, how it hurts to lose your name? Even dogs have their names. [NATASHA *goes softly past the* ACTOR, *stands at* ANNA'S *bed and looks at the dead body.*] Without a name . . . where there is no name there is no man.

NATASHA. Look! . . . dear . . . why . . . she is dead. . . .

ACTOR. [*Shaking his head.*] Impossible. . . .

NATASHA. [*Stands aside.*] In God's name . . . look. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Enters L. U. E.*] What is there to look at?

NATASHA. Anna is dead!

BUBNOFF. Then there will be no more coughing. [*Goes to* ANNA'S *bed, looks for a time at the dead body and then goes to his place.*] Somebody must tell Kleshtsch . . . it's his business. . . .

ACTOR. I'll go. I shall tell him . . . She, too, has lost her name. [*Exit* ACTOR *L. U. E.*]

NATASHA. [*In the centre of the room, to herself partly.*] And I . . . some time, shall languish so, and die forsaken in a cellar. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Spreading out an old torn blanket on his shelf.*] What is the matter . . . what are you muttering?

NATASHA. Nothing . . . only to myself. . . .

BUBNOFF. Are you expecting Waska? Be careful with Waska. . . . He will knock your skull in, some day, for you. . . .

NATASHA. Isn't it all the same to me, who knocks it in? I'd rather have it done by him. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Lies down.*] As you prefer . . . no funeral of mine.

NATASHA. It is the best thing for her that could happen . . . to die . . . yet it is pitiful . . . thou loving Master . . . what did she live for?

BUBNOFF. So with everybody—but, we live. Man is born, lives for a space of time, and dies. I will die too . . . and you will die . . . why pity the dead, then?

[LUKA, *the* TARTAR, KRIVOI ZOBA *and* KLESHTSCH *enter L. U. E.* KLESHTSCH *follows behind the others in shaking spirits.*]

NATASHA. Sh-sh . . . Anna!

KRIVOI ZOBA. We have already heard . . . God take her soul. . . .

TARTAR. [*To* KLESHTSCH.] She must be taken out. She

must be carried into the entry. This is no place for the dead. The living person can have a bed. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Whispering.*] We will take her out. . . .

[*All stand around the body.* KLESHTSCH *looks at the remains of his wife over the shoulders of the others.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*To the* TARTAR.] Do you think she will smell? No . . . while she was still alive she dried up. . . .

NATASHA. For God's sake . . . nobody pities her . . . if anybody had but said a word of kindness.

LUKA. Don't be hurt, my daughter. It is nothing. What have we to do with pitying the dead? We have not enough for each other. And you talk of pitying her.

BUBNOFF. [*Gapes.*] Why waste words . . . when she is dead—no words can help her any more . . . against sickness certain words can be used . . . against death, nothing.

TARTAR. [*Stepping aside.*] The police must be told. . . .

KRIVOI ZOBA. Naturally—that is the regulation. Kleshtsch, have you already reported it?

KLESHTSCH. No . . . now comes the funeral and I have only forty copecs in the world. . . .

KRIVOI ZOBA. Then borrow . . . or we will take up a collection . . . everybody give what he can, one five copecs, another ten . . . but the police must soon be told. Or else, at last, they will think you have beaten your wife to death . . . or something else.

[*Goes to the bunk U. on which the* TARTAR *is lying, and attempts to lie down with him.*]

NATASHA. [*Goes to* BUBNOFF's *bench.*] Now I shall dream about her . . . I always dream of the dead. . . . I am afraid to be alone. . . . It is so dark in the entry.

LUKA. [*Follows with his eyes.*] Be afraid of the living . . . that is what I say to you. . . .

NATASHA. Take me up-stairs, daddy. . . .

LUKA. Come . . . come . . . I will go with you.

[*Exit both L. U. E. Pause.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Yawns.*] Oh, oh! [*To the* TARTAR.] It will soon be spring now, Hassan. . . . Then there will be a little bit of sun for you and me. The peasants now are repairing their plows and harrows . . . they will go to the field soon . . . hm—yes . . . and we, Hassan. He is already snoring, cursed Mohammedan.

BUBNOFF. The Tartars are fond of sleep.

KLESHTSCH. [*Standing in the middle of the room staring stupidly before himself.*] What shall I begin to do now?

KRIVOI ZOBA. Lie down and sleep . . . that's all. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Whispers.*] And . . . she! What shall be done with her? [*Nobody answers him.*]

[*Enter* SAHTIN *and the* ACTOR, *L. U. E.*]

ACTOR. [*Cries.*] Old man! My true adviser. . . .

SAHTIN. Miklucka-Maclai comes . . . ho, ho!

ACTOR. The thing is settled! Patriarch, where is the city . . . where are you?

SAHTIN. Fata Morgana! He has deluded you . . . there are no cities . . . No, no people . . . there is nothing at all!

ACTOR. Liar. . . .

TARTAR. [*Springing up.*] Where is the proprietor? I'll see the proprietor! If we can't sleep here, he shall charge us nothing . . . the dead . . . the drunken. . . .

[*Exit quickly, R. U. E.* SAHTIN *whistles after him.*]

BUBNOFF. [*Awakened.*] Go to bed brats, make no noise, the night is for sleep. . . .

ACTOR. True . . . I have here [*rubs his forehead.*] "Our nets have caught the dead," as it says in a . . . chanson, from Beranger.[2]

SAHTIN. The dead hear not. The dead feel not. Howl . . . shout as much as you like . . . the dead hear not!

[LUKA *appears in the door.*]

[2] In reality a quotation from Pushkin.

ACT III

[*Translator's Note:* In the Russian, the third act takes place upon a new scene, but as the scene of the previous acts may be employed without necessitating any change in dialogue or construction, the stage directions given in this act have the old scene in view. The new scene is described as follows:]

[*A vacant place between two buildings, filled with rubbish and overgrown with weeds. In the background, a high brick fire-wall, which covers the heavens. Near it a small elder-tree. On the right, a dark wall of reinforced wooden beams, part of a barn or stable. On the left, the gray wall of* KOSTILIOFF'S *lodging-house, its rough plaster adhering only in places. This wall runs diagonally, the rear wall of the building, the corner being about the middle of the scene, forming with the fire-wall a narrow passageway. In the gray wall there are two windows, one on a level with the earth, the other four or five feet higher and nearer the rear. Against the gray wall lies a great sled, overturned, with a beam about three yards long. Near the stable wall on the right is a heap of old boards and hewn beams.*

It is evening, the setting sun throws a red light against the fire-wall. Spring has just begun and the snow is scarcely melted. The black twigs of the elder-tree have not begun to swell.

On the beam, side by side, sit NATASHA *and* NASTIAH. *On the pile of boards* LUKA *and the* BARON. KLESHTSCH *lies on a heap of wood near the right wall.* BUBNOFF *is looking out of the lower window.*]

NASTIAH. [*With closed eyes, moving her head in time to the story, which she is telling in a singsong voice.*] In the night, then, he came to the garden, to the summer-bower, as we had arranged . . . I had waited long, trembling for fear and grief . . . and he, too, was trembling from head to foot, and chalk white, but in his hand he held a . . . pistol. . . .

NATASHA. [*Nibbling at sunflower seeds.*] *Just* listen . . . these students are all as mad as March hares.

NASTIAH. And in a terrible voice, he said to me: my true love. . . .

BUBNOFF. Ha, ha, my "true" love, did he say?

BARON. Be still there, let her humbug in peace—you don't have to listen, if it don't please you . . . go on.

NASTIAH. My heart's distraction, said he, my golden treasure; my parents refuse to allow me, said he, to marry you, and threaten me with their curses if I do not give you up, and so I must, said he, take my life . . . and his pistol was frightfully large, and loaded with ten bullets. . . . Farewell, said he, true friend of my heart! My decision is irrevocable . . . I cannot live without you. But I answered him, my never-to-be-forgotten friend . . . my Raoul. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Astonished.*] What's his name . . . Graul?

BARON. You are mistaken, Nastya! The last time you called him Gaston.

NASTIAH. [*Springing up.*] Silence! You vagabond curs! Can you understand what love is . . . real, genuine love! And I . . . I have tasted this genuine love. [*To the* BARON.] You unworthy scamp . . . You were an educated man . . . you say, have drunk your coffee in bed. . . .

LUKA. Have patience! Don't scold her! Show human beings some consideration. . . . It is not what man says but why he says it,—that's the point. Keep on, my love—they don't mean anything.

BUBNOFF. Always laying on the bright hues, raven . . . Nyah, cut loose again!

BARON. Go on.

NATASHA. Pay no attention to them . . . who are they, anyway? They only speak out of envy . . . because they have nothing to tell about themselves . . .

NASTIAH. [*Sits down again.*] I don't want to . . . I won't tell anything more . . . if they don't like to believe it . . . and laugh about it. [*Suddenly brightens up. Is silent a few seconds, closes her eyes again and begins in a loud and rapid*

voice, keeping time with her hand, while in the distance ringing music is heard.] And I answered him: Joy of my life! O my glittering star! Without you, I too, could not live . . . because I love you madly and must love you always, as long as my heart beats in my bosom! But, said I, rob yourself not of your young life . . . for look, your dear parents whose single joy you are—they stand in need of you. Give me up . . . I would rather pine away . . . out of longing for you, my love . . . I am—alone . . . I am—wholly yours . . . yes, let me die . . . what matters it . . . I am good for nothing . . . and have nothing . . . absolutely nothing . . .

[*Covers her face with her hands and cries softly.*]

NATASHA. [*Goes to her side, quietly.*] Don't.

[LUKA *strokes* NASTIAH'S *head, laughing.*]

BUBNOFF. [*Laughs aloud.*] Oh . . . ho . . . a deceiving minx, . . . eh?

BARON. [*Laughs aloud.*] Now—grandfather—do you believe what she tells? She gets it all out of her book . . . out of "Disastrous Love," all nonsense. Drop it.

NATASHA. What is that to you? You'd better keep still. God has punished you enough. . . .

NASTIAH. [*Furious.*] You! Tell us, where is your soul!

LUKA. [*Takes her by the hand.*] Come my love. Do not be angry . . . They mean nothing, I know . . . I—believe you. You are right, and not they . . . if you yourself believe it, then you have had just such true love . . . Certainly, quite certainly. And he there, your lover, don't be angry. . . . He only laughs perhaps . . . about it . . . because he is envious . . . No doubt in his whole life he never felt anything genuine . . . No, certainly not. Come!

NASTIAH. [*Presses her arm against her breast.*] Grandfather. Before God . . . it is true! It is all true. . . . A French student . . . Gastoscha was his name . . . and he had a little black beard . . . he always wore patent leather shoes. . . . May lightning strike me instantly if it isn't true! And how he loved me . . . oh, how he loved me.

LUKA. I am sure. Say no more. I believe you. He wore

patent leather shoes, you say? Aye, aye, and you have naturally loved him too. [*Exit both L. U. E.*]

BARON. A stupid thing, good hearted but stupid, intolerably stupid.

BUBNOFF. How can a man lie so unceasingly? Just like before a coroner.

NATASHA. Falsehood must indeed be pleasanter than the truth . . . I . . . too.

BARON. What "I too?" Say more.

NATASHA. I too, think of lots of them . . . to myself . . . and wait. . . .

BARON. For what?

NATASHA. [*Laughing embarrassed.*] Just so . . . perhaps, think I . . . somebody will come tomorrow . . . some strange person . . . or there may happen . . . something that never happened before. . . . I have already waited long . . . I still am waiting . . . and after all . . . to look at it right . . . can anything great be expected? [*Pause.*]

BARON. [*Laughing.*] We can expect nothing at all. . . . I least of all—I expect nothing more. For me everything has already been. All is past . . . at an end . . . what more?

NATASHA. Sometimes, too, I imagine, that tomorrow . . . I will die suddenly . . . which fills me with fear. . . . In summer we think willingly of death . . . then comes the storm, and every moment one may be struck by lightning. . . .

BARON. Your life has not been laid in easy lines. . . . Your sister has the disposition of a fiend.

NATASHA. Whose life is easy? All have it hard, as far as I can see. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Who has previously lain silent and motionless, springing up.*] All? That is not true! Not all! If it was hard for all . . . then each of us could stand it . . . there would be nothing to complain about.

BUBNOFF. Say, are you possessed by the devil? Why howl?

[KLESHTSCH *lies down again and stares vacantly.*]

BARON. I must see what Nastya is doing . . . I'll have to

make up with her . . . or we shall have no more money for whiskey.

BUBNOFF. People can never stop lying! I can understand Nastyka; she is accustomed to painting her cheeks. . . . So she tries it with the soul . . . paints her little soul red . . . but the rest, why do they do it? Luka, for example . . . turns everything into stories . . . without ceremony . . . why does he always lie? . . . at his age? . . .

BARON. [*Goes L. U. E. laughing.*] All of us have gray souls. . . . We like to lay on a bit of red.

LUKA. [*Enters from L. U. E.*] Tell me, Baron, why do you torment the girl? Let her alone. . . . Can't she cry to pass the time away . . . she only sheds tears for pleasure . . . what harm can that do you?

BARON. She is a soft-brained thing, pilgrim . . . It's hard to swallow . . . today Raoul, tomorrow Gaston . . . and everlastingly one and the same. But anyway, I'll make up with her again. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

LUKA. Go, treat her with friendliness . . . treat every one with friendliness—injure no one.

NATASHA. How good you are, grandfather . . . how is it that you are so good?

LUKA. I am good, you say. Nyah . . . if it is true, all right. . . . [*Behind the red wall is heard soft singing and accordeon playing.*] But you see, my girl—there must be some one to be good . . . We must have pity on mankind. Christ, remember, had pity for us all and so taught us to be likewise. Have pity when there is still time, believe me, it is very good. I was once, for example, employed as a watchman, at a country place which belonged to an engineer, not far from the city of Tomsk, in Siberia. The house stood in the middle of the forest, an out-of-the-way location . . . and it was winter and I was all alone in the country house. . . . It was beautiful there . . . magnificent! And once . . . I heard them scrambling up!

NATASHA. Thieves!

LUKA. Yes. They crept higher and I took my rifle and went

outside. I looked up: two men . . . as they were opening a window and so busy that they did not see anything of me at all . . . I cried to them: Heh there . . . get out of that . . . and would you think it, they fell on me with a hand ax . . . I warned them—Halt, I cried, or else I fire . . . then I aimed first at one and then at the other. They fell on their knees saying, pardon us. I was pretty hot . . . on account of the hand ax, you remember. You devils, I cried, I told you to clear out and you didn't . . . and now, I said, one of you go into the brush and get a switch. It was done: And now, I commanded, one of you stretch out on the ground, and the other thrash him . . . and so they whipped each other at my command. And when they had each had a sound beating, they said to me: Grandfather, said they, for the sake of Christ give us a piece of bread. We haven't a bite in our bodies. These, my daughter, were the thieves [*laughs*] who had fallen upon me with the hand ax. Yes . . . they were a pair of splendid fellows. . . . I said to them: If only you had asked for bread! Then they answered: We had gotten past that . . . we had asked and asked and nobody would give us anything . . . endurance was worn out . . . nyah, and so they remained with me the whole winter. One of them, Stephen by name, liked to take the rifle and go into the woods . . . and the other, Jakoff, was constantly ill, always coughing . . . the three of us watched the place, and when spring came, they said farewell, grandfather, and went away—to Russia. . . .

NATASHA. Were they convicts, escaping?

LUKA. They were . . . fugitives . . . they had left their colony . . . a pair of splendid fellows. . . . If I had not had pity on them—who knows what would have happened. They might have killed me. . . . Then they would be taken to court again, put in prison, sent back to Siberia . . . why all that? You learn nothing good in prison, nor in Siberia . . . but a man, what can he not learn. Man may teach his fellowmen something good . . . very simply. [*Pause.*]

BUBNOFF. Hm . . . yes . . . and I . . . can never lie. Why should I do it? Always out with the truth, that is my

way of thinking, whether it pleases or not. Why trouble to be considerate?

KLESHTSCH. [*Springing up, as though stabbed, crying.*] What is the truth? Where is the truth—where! [*Beats with his hands on his torn clothes.*] There is the truth—there! No work. . . . No strength . . . in the limbs—that is the truth! No shelter . . . no shelter. . . . It is time to die, that is your truth, curse it! What is it to me, this—truth? Only let me sigh in peace—let me sigh. What have I done? Why the devil should we have truth? Curse it, we can't live . . . that is the truth!

BUBNOFF. Just listen . . . he is full of matter. . . .

LUKA. The good Lord . . . but say, my friend, you. . . .

KLESHTSCH. [*Trembling with excitement.*] I have heard you talk of the truth. You, pilgrim—you consoling every one . . . and I say to you: I hate every one. And this truth too, this accursed truth . . . do you understand? Mark you, accursed shall truth be.

[*Hurries out, L. U. E., looking back as he goes.*]

LUKA. Aye, aye, aye; but he is out of his head . . . and where can he be running?

NATASHA. He rages away like one gone mad.

BUBNOFF. He laid it all down in the proper order . . . as in a theatre . . . the same thing happens often . . . he is not accustomed to life. . . .

PEPEL. [*Enters slowly L. U. E.*] Peace to you honest folks! Nyah, Luka, old devil—telling more stories?

LUKA. You ought to have seen just now, a man crying out.

PEPEL. Kleshtsch, you mean, him? What is the matter with him now? He ran past me, as if he were crazy. . . .

LUKA. You will run the same way too, when once it gets into your heart. . . .

PEPEL. [*Sits.*] I can't endure him . . . he is embittered, and proud. [*He imitates* KLESHTSCH.] "I am a working-man . . ." as though others were inferior to him . . . Work indeed, if it gives you pleasure . . . but why do you need to be so proud about it? If you estimate men by work, then a

horse is better than any man. He pulls a wagon—and holds his mouth about it. Natasha . . . are your people at home?

NATASHA. They have gone to the graveyard . . . and then they were to go to church.

PEPEL. You're therefore at leisure . . . that happens seldom.

LUKA. [*Thoughtfully to* BUBNOFF.] You say— the truth . . . but the truth is not a cure for every ill . . . you cannot always heal the soul with truth . . . for example, the following case: I knew a man who believed in the land of justice. . . .

BUBNOFF. In wh-at?

LUKA. In the land of justice. There must be, said he, a land of justice somewhere in the world . . . in which unusual men, so to speak, must live . . . good men, who respect each other, who help each other when they can . . . everything there is good and beautiful. It is a country which every man should seek. . . . He was poor and things went bad with him . . . so bad, indeed, that soon nothing remained for him to do but to lie down and die—but still he did not lose courage. He often laughed and said to himself: it makes no difference—I can bear it! A little longer yet will I wait—then throw this life aside and go into the land of justice . . . it was his only pleasure . . . this land of justice. . . .

PEPEL. Yes, and . . . Has he gone there?

BUBNOFF. Where! Ha, ha, ha!

LUKA. At that time there was brought to the place—the thing happened in Siberia—an exile, a man of learning . . . with books and maps and all sorts of arts . . . And the sick man spoke to the sage: Tell me, I implore you, where lies the land of justice, and how can one succeed in getting there. Then the learned man opened his books and spread his maps out, and searched and searched, but he found the land of justice nowhere. Everything else was correct, all countries were shown—the land of justice alone did not appear.

PEPEL. [*Softly.*] No? Was it really not there?

[BUBNOFF *laughs.*]

NATASHA. What are you laughing at? Go on, grandfather.

LUKA. The man would not believe him . . . It must be there, said he . . . look more closely! For all your books and maps, said he, are not worth a whistle if the land of justice is not shown on them. The learned man felt himself insulted. My maps, said he, are absolutely correct, and a land of justice nowhere exists. So, the other was furious. What, he cried—have I now lived and lived and lived, endured and endured, and always believed there was such a country. And according to your plans there is none! That is robbery . . . and he said to the learned man: You good-for-nothing scamp . . . you are a cheat and no sage. Then he gave him a sound blow over the skull, and still another. . . . [*Is silent a few moments.*] And then he went home and choked himself . . .

[*All are silent.* LUKA *looks silently at* PEPEL *and* NATASHA.]

PEPEL. The devil take him . . . the story is it not cheerful. . . .

NATASHA. He couldn't stand it . . . to be so disappointed.

BUBNOFF. [*In a surly tone.*] All tales. . . .

PEPEL. Hm, yes . . . there is your land of justice . . . it was not to be found, it seems. . . .

NATASHA. One should have sympathy for him . . . the poor man. . . .

BUBNOFF. All imagination . . . ha, ha! The land of justice—stuff! Ha, ha, ha, ha! [*Exit into kitchen.*]

LUKA. [*Looking after him.*] He laughs, ah yes. [*Pause.*] Yes, children . . . farewell . . . I shall leave you soon. . . .

PEPEL. Where do you journey, then?

LUKA. To Little Russia. . . . I hear they have discovered a new religion there. . . . I will see what it is . . . yes . . . Men search and search, always looking for something better . . . may God give them patience.

PEPEL. Think you, they will find it?

LUKA. Who? Mankind? Certainly they shall find it. . . . He who yearns . . . he finds . . . who searches zealously—he finds!

NATASHA. I wish them a happy journey. I hope they will find something.

LUKA. That shall they surely do. But we must help them, my daughter . . . must respect them. . . .

NATASHA. How shall I help them? I am myself . . . so helpless. . . .

PEPEL. [*Restrained.*] Listen to me, Natasha . . . I want to speak to you . . . in his presence . . . he knows it . . . come . . . with me!

NATASHA. Where? To Prison?

PEPEL. I have already told you that I will give up stealing. By God, I will! When I say a thing, I keep my word. I have learned to read and write . . . I can easily make a living. [*With a movement of the hand towards* LUKA.] He advised me—to try it in Siberia . . . to go of my own accord. . . . How does it strike you—shall we go? Believe me, I am sick of this life. Ah, Natasha! I see indeed how things are . . . I have consoled my conscience with the thought that others steal more than I—and are still respected . . . but how does that help me . . . not in the least. But I have no regret . . . nor, as I believe, any conscience. . . . But I feel one thing: that I must live in a different way. I must live better . . . I must live . . . so that I can respect myself. . . .

LUKA. Quite right, my boy. May God be with you . . . May Christ help you! Well resolved: a man must respect himself . . .

PEPEL. From childhood, I have been—only a thief . . . Always I was called, Waska, the pickpocket, Waska, the son of a thief! See, it was of no consequence to me, as long as they would have it so . . . so they would have it . . . I was a thief, perhaps, only out of spite . . . because nobody came along to call me anything except—thief . . . You call me something else, Natasha . . . now?

NATASHA. [*In low spirits.*] I do not quite believe it all . . . words are words . . . and then . . . I don't know. . . . Today I am disquieted . . . my heart is despondent As

though I dreaded something. You would not begin today, Wassili. . . .

PEPEL. When else, then! This is not the first time I have spoken. . . .

NATASHA. Shall I go with you. . . . I love you . . . not too much. . . . Sometimes I like you . . . but then at times I cannot look at you . . . in any case I do not love . . . when one loves, one sees no fault in the beloved . . . and I see faults in you. . . .

PEPEL. You will soon love me, have no fear! You will become accustomed to me . . . only say "yes." For over a year I have been watching you, and I see that you are an honest girl . . . a good, true woman . . . I love you with all my heart.

[WASSILISSA, *still in gay street dress, appears at the door at the head of the stair, R. U. E. She stands with one hand on the balustrade and the other on the door post and laughs.*]

NATASHA. So . . . you love me with all your heart, and my sister. . . .

PEPEL. [*Embarrassed.*] What do I care for her? Her kind is nothing. . . .

LUKA. It does not matter, my daughter. One eats turnips when he has no bread. . . .

PEPEL. [*Gloomily.*] Have pity on me. It is no easy life that I lead—friendless; pursued like a wolf. . . . I sink like a man in a swamp . . . whatever I clutch is slimy and rotten . . . nothing is firm . . . your sister though, would be different . . . if she were not so avaricious . . . I would have risked everything for her . . . If she had only kept faith with me . . . but her heart is set on something else . . . her heart is full of greed . . . and longs for freedom—and only that longing in order to become more dissolute. She cannot help me . . . but you—like a young fir-tree, you are prickly but you give support. . . .

LUKA. And I say to you: take him, my daughter, take him. He is a good-hearted boy. All you must do is to remind him

often that he is good . . . so that he will not forget it. He will soon believe you. Only say to him, often, Waska, you are a good man . . . don't forget it! Think it over, my love—what else shall you begin? Your sister—she is a bad lot: and of her husband—nothing good can be said either: no words can be found to express his baseness . . . and this whole life here . . . where shall you find a way out? . . . But Waska . . . he is a lusty fellow.

NATASHA. I cannot find a way . . . I know that . . . I have already thought it over myself . . . but I . . . whom can I trust? . . . I see no way out. . . .

PEPEL. There is but one way . . . but I shall not let you take it . . . I would kill you first. . . .

NATASHA. [*Laughing.*] Just look . . . I am not yet your wife, and you will already kill me.

PEPEL. [*Putting his arms around her.*] Say "yes," Natasha. It will soon be well. . . .

NATASHA. [*Presses him affectionately.*] . . . One thing I will tell you, Wassili. . . . And God shall be my witness: if you strike me a single time . . . or insult me . . . that shall be the end . . . either I hang myself, or . . .

PEPEL. May this hand wither up, if I touch you. . . .

LUKA. Don't be troubled, my love, you can believe him. You are necessary to his happiness, and he to yours. . . .

WASSILISSA. [*From above.*] And the match is made. May God give you love and harmony.

NATASHA. They are already back . . . Oh, God! They have seen us . . . ah, Wassili!

PEPEL. What are you afraid of? Nobody dares touch you now!

WASSILISSA. Do not be afraid, Natalya. He will not strike you . . . He can neither strike, nor love . . . I know him.

LUKA. [*Softly.*] Ah, such a woman . . . a venomous snake. . . .

WASSILISSA. He is only bold with words. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*Enters R. from kitchen.*] Nataschka! What are you doing here, lazy-bones? Gossiping, eh! Complaining

about your relatives: the samovar is not in order, the table not cleared off.

NATASHA. [*Going R. Kitchen.*] You were going to church, I thought. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. It does not concern you what we are going to do. Mind your own business . . . do what you are told.

PEPEL. Shut up. She is not your servant now. . . . Natalya, don't budge . . . don't move a finger.

NATASHA. It is not for you to give orders here. . . . Too soon yet for orders. [*Exit R.*]

PEPEL. [*To* KOSTILIOFF.] Enough of that. You have mortified the poor girl enough! She is mine now.

KOSTILIOFF. You-u? When did you buy her? What did you pay for her? [WASSILISSA *laughs aloud.*]

LUKA. Wasja! Get out. . . .

PEPEL. You're having a good time over me, aren't you? You may weep yet!

WASSILISSA. What do you say! I am afraid of you. [*Laughs.*]

LUKA. Go away, Wassili! Don't you see how she plays with you . . . pricks you on—can't you understand?

PEPEL. Ah . . . So! [*To* WASSILISSA.] Don't give yourself any trouble. What you want will not be done.

WASSILISSA. And what I do not want done, will not be done, Wasja!

PEPEL. [*Threatens her with his fist.*] We shall see . . . [*Exit L. U. E.*]

WASSILISSA. [*As she goes out R. U. E.*] I will prepare a glorious wedding for you.

KOSTILIOFF. [*Advances on* LUKA.] So . . . What are you stirring up, old man?

LUKA. Nothing, old man.

KOSTILIOFF. Um! You are going to leave us, I hear!

LUKA. It is time.

KOSTILIOFF. Where to?

LUKA. Wherever my nose points.

KOSTILIOFF. You are going to become a vagabond again. You seem to be a rolling stone. . . .

LUKA. Resting iron is rusting iron, says the proverb.

KOSTILIOFF. That may be true of iron, but a man must remain in one place . . . Men cannot be tumbling about like cockroaches in the kitchen . . . first here, then there. . . . A man must have a place which he can call home. . . . He must not be crawling aimlessly about the earth.

LUKA. And if one—is at home every where?

KOSTILIOFF. Then he is only—a tramp . . . a good-for-nothing fellow . . . a man must make himself useful . . . he must work. . . .

LUKA. What's that you're saying?

KOSTILIOFF. Yes, indeed! What else then? . . . You call yourself a wanderer, a pilgrim. . . . What is a pilgrim? A pilgrim is one who goes his own way—keeps to himself . . . has peculiarities, so to speak, is unlike other people . . . that's what we understand about a true pilgrim. . . . He ponders and unravels . . . and at last discovers something . . . perhaps the truth, who knows. . . . He holds his truth for himself, and remains silent. If he is a true pilgrim, he remains silent. . . . Or, he speaks so that no one understands him. . . . He has no wish to be gratified, doesn't turn people's heads, does not butt-in. How others live—gives him no concern. . . . He lives proudly and in rectitude . . . searches out the forest and the unfrequented places . . . where no one comes. He is in nobody's way, condemns nobody . . . but prays for all . . . for all the sinners of this world . . . for me, for you . . . for all! He flies from the vanity of this world—to prayer. So it is. [*Pause.*] And you . . . what sort of a pilgrim are you . . . you have not even a passport. . . . Every law-abiding citizen must have a passport . . . all orderly people have passports . . . yes. . . .

LUKA. There are people and there are men. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Don't get funny! Don't give us any riddle . . . I am not your fool. . . . What do you mean by people —and men?

LUKA. This is no riddle. I mean—there are stony fields which are not worthy sowing . . . and there are fertile fields . . . whatever is sown thereon—yields a 'harvest . . . so it is. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. And what does all this mean?

LUKA. You, for example . . . If God himself said to you: "Michailo, be a man," it is certain that it would be useless . . . As you are, so you will remain for all time. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. Ah . . . and do you know that my wife's uncle is on the police force? And if I . . .

WASSILISSA. [*Enters R.*] Michailo Ivanitsch, come drink your tea. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*To* LUKA.] Hear me, you—keep out of this row—leave my house. . . .

WASSILISSA. Yes, put on your knapsack, old man . . . your tongue is too long . . . who knows . . . perhaps you may be an escaped convict.

KOSTILIOFF. Be sure that you disappear today . . . or else . . . we shall see.

LUKA. Or else you will call your uncle, eh? Call him . . . tell him, you can catch a convict here, uncle . . . then your uncle will receive a reward . . . three copecs. . . .

BUBNOFF. [*Looking out from over the stove.*] What business are you haggling about . . . what is it . . . for three copecs? . . .

LUKA. We are trying to sell me.

WASSILISSA. [*To her husband.*] Let's go.

BUBNOFF. For three copecs. Take care, old man . . . or they will sell you for one copec. . . .

KOSTILIOFF. [*To* BUBNOFF.] What are you staring out of there for, like a hobgoblin out of a tunnel?

[*Approaches R. with* WASSILISSA.]

WASSILISSA. How many blackbirds there are in the world . . . how many knaves.

LUKA. I wish you a good appetite.

WASSILISSA. [*Turns to him.*] Take good care of yourself —you dirty toadstool. [*Exit with* KOSTILIOFF *R.*]

LUKA. Tonight—I leave.

BUBNOFF. You'll do right. It is always best to go before it is too late . . .

LUKA. Quite right.

BUBNOFF. I speak from experience. I took my own departure once at the right moment, and saved myself a trip to Siberia.

LUKA. What do you say?

BUBNOFF. It is true. The case was thus: my wife had a love affair with my assistant . . . and a very good assistant he was, I must admit . . . he could make the most beautiful polar bear furs from dog skins . . . cat skins he dyed into Kangaroos . . . into musk rats . . . into anything you could wish . . . a very clever fellow. My wife was madly in love with him. They hung on each other so much that I feared every moment they would poison me or put me out of the world in some other way. I whipped my wife often, and my assistant whipped me . . . and I tell you he made a savage job of it, too. Once he pulled half my beard out and broke a rib for me. Naturally I was not particular when I struck back . . . gave my wife one over the skull with an iron yardstick . . . we were generally fighting like good fellows. Finally I saw there was no chance for me . . . they would surely fix it for me. Then I arranged a plan—to kill my wife . . . I had quite made up my mind. But in the nick of time —I came to my senses—and cleared out of the row. . . .

LUKA. It was better so, let them be quiet there making polar bears out of dogs.

BUBNOFF. Worse luck, the shop was in her name . . . only what I had on my back I kept . . . though, to speak honestly, I would have drunk the place up in no time . . . I am a glorious drunk you understand.

LUKA. A glorious drunk.

BUBNOFF. Oh, a glorious drunk. When things come my way I soak up everything in sight. And then I am lazy . . . nothing is more terrible than work.

[SAHTIN *and the* ACTOR *come in quarreling.*]

SAHTIN. Nonsense! You will go nowhere. You're talking stupid stuff. Tell me, pilgrim . . . what spark have you been throwing into this burned stump?

ACTOR. You lie! Grandfather, tell him that he lies. I go. I have worked today. I have cleaned the pavement . . . and drunk no whiskey. What do you say now? There, see —two fifteeners, and I am sober.

SAHTIN. It is all wrong! Give it to me, I'll spend it on drink . . . or lose it at cards.

ACTOR. Let it alone. It is for the journey.

LUKA. [*To* SAHTIN.] Listen you—why do you try to upset his resolution?

SAHTIN. "Tell me, you wizard, darling of the gods—what shall fate with my future do?" [3] Moneyless, brother, I have played everything away, broke. But the world is not lost, old man, there are still sharper knaves than I.

LUKA. You are a lusty brother, Constantine . . . a loveable man. . . .

BUBNOFF. You actor, come here.

[*The* ACTOR *goes to the stove and talks apart with* BUBNOFF.]

SAHTIN. When I was still young, I was a jolly chicken. I look back on it with pleasure. . . . I had the soul of a man. . . . I danced splendidly, acted, was a famous bachelor . . . simply phenomenal!

LUKA. How then have you gotten so far afield . . . hm?

SAHTIN. You are curious, old man. You would know all . . . and what for?

LUKA. I always like to know about . . . mankind's difficulties . . . and I do not understand you, Constantine. When I look at you; such a lovable man . . . so sensible . . . then suddenly . . .

SAHTIN. The prison, grandfather. Four years and seven months I have done, and coming out, a discharged convict, I found my course in life shut up. . . .

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[3] Citation from Pushkin.

LUKA. Oh, oh, oh! Why then were you imprisoned?

SAHTIN. On account of a deceiver—whom I killed in a passion. . . . In prison, too, I learned my art of card playing. . . .

LUKA. And why did you kill him? On account of a woman?

SAHTIN. On account of my own sister. . . . Stop questioning . . . it annoys me. . . . It is . . . an old story . . . my sister is dead . . . nine years have gone by . . . she was a splendid creature . . . my sister. . . .

LUKA. You take life easily. It falls more heavily on others. . . . Did you just now, for example, hear the locksmith crying out—oh, oh!

SAHTIN. Kleshtsch?

LUKA. The same. No work, he cried . . . absolutely none. . . .

SAHTIN. You will get accustomed to that. . . . Tell me, what shall I now begin to do?

LUKA. [*Softly.*] Look, there he comes. . . .

[KLESHTSCH *enters slowly L. U. E. with sunken head.*]

SAHTIN. Heh, there, widower! What are you hanging your head for? What are you brooding over?

KLESHTSCH. My skull is splitting from it. . . . What shall I do now! My tools are gone. . . . The funeral has eaten everything up. . . .

SAHTIN. I will give you a piece of advice. Do nothing at all. Burden the earth with your weight—simple enough.

KLESHTSCH. You advise well. . . . I—still am ashamed before others.

SAHTIN. Drop it . . . people are not ashamed to let you live worse than a dog. Just imagine if you would not work, and I would not work . . . and still hundreds and thousands of others would not work . . . and finally everybody—understand?—everybody quit work and nobody did anything at all—what, do you think, would happen then?

KLESHTSCH. Everybody would starve. . . .

LUKA. [*To* SAHTIN.] There is such a sect. "Jumpers," they call themselves. . . . They talk exactly like you. . . .

SAHTIN. I know them. . . . They are not at all such fools, pilgrim.

[*From* KOSTILIOFF'S *room R. U. E. screaming.*]

NATASHA. [*Within.*] What are you doing—stop . . . what have I done?

LUKA. [*Disquieted.*] Who is screaming there? Was it not Natasha? Ah, you. . . .

[*From* KOSTILIOFF'S *room is heard a loud alarm, and then from the kitchen the sound of crashing dishes.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Within, screaming.*] A—ah—you cat—you . . . heathen.

WASSILISSA. [*Within.*] Wait . . . I'll give her . . . so . . . and so. . . .

NATASHA. [*Within.*] Help! They are killing me!

SAHTIN. [*Runs up steps R. U. E. shouting.*] Heh, there! What are you howling about?

LUKA. [*Walks about uneasily.*] Waska . . . he must be called. . . . Wassili. . . . Oh, God! . . . Children, my dears.

ACTOR. [*Hurries out, L. U. E.*] I'll bring him . . . right away. . . .

BUBNOFF. They're treating the poor girl badly these days.

SAHTIN. Come, pilgrim. . . . We will be witnesses. . . .

LUKA. [*Exit after* SAHTIN *R.*] Why witnesses? Too often, already, have I been a witness. If Waska would only come . . . oh! this is terrible! terrible!

NATASHA. [*Within.*] Sister . . . dear sister . . . wah . . . wa . . . a. . . .

BUBNOFF. Now they have stopped her mouth. . . . I'll see myself.

[*The noise in* KOSTILIOFF'S *room is weaker, and nothing comes from the kitchen.*]

KOSTILIOFF. [*Within.*] Halt!

[*A door is slammed within, and the whole noise is cut off as if by a hatchet. On the stage, silence. . . . It is twilight.*]

KLESHTSCH. [*Sits on bench U. taking no part, and rubbing his hands together. Then he begins to mumble to himself, at first indistinctly. Then louder.*] How then? . . . a man must live. [*Louder.*] At least a shelter . . . but no, not that . . . not even a corner where I can lie down. . . . Nothing but the bare man . . . helpless and deserted.

[*Exit bent over, L. U. E. slowly. For a few moments, ominous silence. Then somewhere within, on the R. a terrible noise, a chaos of tones, louder and louder and nearer and nearer. Then a single voice is heard.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Within.*] I am her sister. Let me go. . . .
KOSTILIOFF. [*Within.*] What right have you to interfere?
WASSILISSA. [*Within.*] You convict!
SAHTIN. [*Within.*] Bring Waska . . . be quick . . . Zoba, strike.

[*A policeman's whistle is heard.*]

TARTAR. [*Jumps down the steps, R. U. E., his right hand bound up.*] What sort of laws are these . . . to murder in broad daylight?

[KRIVOI ZOBA *hurries in L. U. E., followed by* KOSTILIOFF.]

KRIVOI ZOBA. Now, he got it from me.
MEDVIEDEFF. How did you come to strike him?
TARTAR. And you—do you not know what your duty is?
MEDVIEDEFF. [*Running after* KRIVOI ZOBA.] Stop! Give me my whistle back. [*Exit L. U. E.*]
KOSTILIOFF. [*Enters R. U. E.*] Abram! Catch him . . . hold him tight. He has killed me. . . .

[*Down the steps R. U. E. come* KVASCHNYA *and* NASTIAH. *They help* NATASHA, *who is badly beaten up.* SAHTIN

runs up the stairs, bumping into WASSILISSA, *who is throwing her arms about and trying to strike her sister.* ALYOSCHKA *is jumping around like one possessed. He whistles in* WASSILISSA'S *ear and howls. A couple of ragged fellows and some men and women appear L. U. E.*]

SAHTIN. [*To* WASSILISSA.] Enough, you damned owl!

WASSILISSA. Away, convict. If it costs me my life, I will tear her to pieces.

KVASCHNYA. [*Leads* NATASHA *aside.*] Stop, Karpovna . . . for shame. How can you be so inhuman?

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Re-enters L. U. E., takes* SAHTIN *by the collar.*] Aha! Now I have you!

SAHTIN. Krivoi Zoba . . . Waska, Waska.

[*All storm the entrance, L. U. E.* NATASHA *is taken to the bed, L.*]

[PEPEL *enters L. U. E. Pushes them away.*]

PEPEL. Where is Natasha, you?

KOSTILIOFF. [*Crouches on the steps R. U. E.*] Abram! Catch Waska . . . brother, help catch Waska . . . the thief . . . the robber. . . .

PEPEL. There, you old goat.

[*Strikes* KOSTILIOFF *brutally. He falls so that his body lies on the landing, his legs hidden up by the stairs.* PEPEL *hurries to* NATASHA.]

WASSILISSA. Fix Waska . . . friends . . . do up the thief!

MEDVIEDEFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] You shouldn't have interfered . . . this is a family affair here. They are all related to each other . . . and who are you?

PEPEL. [*To* NATASHA.] What did she hit you with? Did she stab you? . . .

KVASCHNYA. Look what a beast. They have scalded her legs with hot water.

NASTIAH. They turned the samovar over. . . .

TARTAR. It might have been an accident . . . if you are not sure you should not accuse. . . .

NATASHA. [*Half unconscious.*] Wassili . . . take me away . . . hide me. . . .

WASSILISSA. Look, my friends . . . come here. He is dead . . . they have killed him. . . .

[*All gather at the landing.* BUBNOFF *separates himself from the others and crosses to* PEPEL.]

BUBNOFF. [*Softly.*] Waska! The old man . . . is done for.

PEPEL. [*Looks at* BUBNOFF *as though he did not understand.*] Get a cab . . . she must be taken to the hospital. . . . I'll settle the bill.

BUBNOFF. Listen to what I'm saying. Somebody has finished the old man. . . .

[*The noise on the stage subsides like a fire into which water has been poured. Half aloud separate sentences are uttered.*]

Is it really true?
We have it there.
Terrible.
We had better get out, brother.
The devil!
We need clear heads now.
Get out before the police come.

[*The group becomes smaller.* BUBNOFF *and the* TARTAR *disappear.* NASTIAH *and* KVASCHNYA *stoop to* KOSTILIOFF'S *body.*]

WASSILISSA. [*Rises and cries in a triumphant tone.*] They have killed him . . . my husband! And who did it? He, there! Waska killed him. I saw it, my friends. I saw it! Now, Waska! Police! Police!

PEPEL. [*Leaves* NATASHA.] Let me alone . . . get out of the way. [*Stares at the body. To* WASSILISSA.] Now? Now you are glad? [*Kicks the body.*] Scotched at last . . . the

old hound. Now you have your desire. . . . Shall I treat you in the same way . . . and twist your necks?

[*Falls on her, but is quietly caught by* SAHTIN *and* KRIVOI ZOBA. WASSILISSA *hides L. U. E.*]

SAHTIN. Come to your senses.

KRIVOI ZOBA. P-r-r-r! Where would you spring?

WASSILISSA. [*Appearing again.*] Nyah, Waska, friend of my heart! Nobody escapes his fate . . . the police! Abram . . . whistle!

MEDVIEDEFF. They have stolen my whistle, the fiends. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. Here it is.

[*He whistles,* MEDVIEDEFF *chases him.*]

SAHTIN. [*Leads* PEPEL *back to* NATASHA.] Don't worry Waska. Killed in a row . . . a trifle! Only a short sentence for that. . . .

WASSILISSA. Hold him tight. Waska murdered him. . . . I saw it!

SAHTIN. I handed him a couple myself. . . . How much does an old man need? Call me as a witness, Waska. . . .

PEPEL. I . . . do I need to justify myself? . . . But Wassilissa. . . . I'll pull her into it! She wanted it done. . . . She incited me to kill her husband . . . yes, she was the instigator. . . .

NATASHA. [*Suddenly springing up.*] Ah. . . . [*In a loud voice.*] Now it is clear. . . . That's how it stands. Wassili! Listen, good people: it was all arranged. He and my sister, they plotted it out, they laid their plans! I see, Wassili! Before . . . you spoke with me . . . that was part of it! Good people, she is his mistress . . . you know it . . . everybody knows it. . . . They understand each other. She, she instigated the murder . . . her husband was in the way . . . for that reason . . . she beat me so. . . .

PEPEL. Natalija! What are you saying? . . . What are you saying?

SAHTIN. Foolish chatter.

WASSILISSA. She lies! All of it is lies. . . . I know of nothing. . . . Waska killed him . . . he alone!

NATASHA. They have plotted it out. . . . They shall be convicted . . . both of them. . . .

SAHTIN. Here is a game for you. . . . Now, Wassili, hold fast or they will drown you.

KRIVOI ZOBA. I can't understand . . . ah . . . far away from here.

PEPEL. Natalija. . . . Speak . . . are you in earnest? Can you believe that I . . . with her. . . .

SAHTIN. For God's sake, Natasha, be sensible.

WASSILISSA. [*On the landing.*] They killed my husband . . . you high born . . . Waska Pepel, the thief killed him, Mr. Commissioner, I saw it . . . everybody saw it.

NATASHA. [*Waltzing about half senseless.*] Good people . . . my sister and Waska . . . they killed him. Mr. Policeman . . . listen to me . . . these two, my sister put him up to it . . . her lover . . . she instigated him . . . there he is, the accursed—the two did it. Arrest them . . . take them to court . . . and take me, too . . . to prison with me! For the sake of God . . . to prison. . . .

ACT IV

[*The same setting except that* PEPEL'S *room is not to be seen, the partitions having been removed. The anvil, too, where* KLESHTSCH *sat, is gone. In the corner which was occupied by* PEPEL'S *chamber is a bunk on which the* TARTAR *lies, restlessly rolling about and groaning with pain.* KLESHTSCH *sits at the table repairing an accordeon and now and then trying the chords. At the other end of the table sit* SAHTIN, *the* BARON, *and* NASTIAH. *Before them a bottle of spirits, three bottles of beer and a great hunk of black bread. On the stove the* ACTOR, *shifting about and coughing. It is night. The*

stage is lit by a lamp which is in the middle of the table. Outside the wind howls.]

KLESHTSCH. Yes. . . . In the midst of the row he disappeared.

BARON. He took flight before the police, as a fog before the sun.

SAHTIN. So all sinners fly before the face of the just.

NASTIAH. He was a splendid old man . . . and you are not men . . . you are rust. . . .

BARON. [*Drinks.*] To your health, lady!

SAHTIN. An interesting patriarch . . . truly! Our Nastiah fell in love with him.

NASTIAH. True. . . . I fell in love with him. He had an eye for everything . . . he understood everything. . . .

SAHTIN. [*Laughs.*] For some people he was a Godsend . . . like mush for the toothless.

BARON. [*Laughs.*] Or a poultice for an abscess.

KLESHTSCH. He had a sympathetic heart . . . you here . . . have no sympathy.

SAHTIN. What good would it do you for me to show you pity?

KLESHTSCH. You need not sympathize . . . but at least . . . do not injure me. . . .

TARTAR. [*Gets up on his bench and moves his injured hand back and forth, as if it were a baby.*] The old man was good. . . . He had respect for the law in his heart . . . and whoever in his heart keeps the law . . . that man is good. He who does not—is lost. . . .

BARON. What law do you mean, prince?

TARTAR. As you will . . . the law . . . the law to you . . . you understand me.

BARON. Go on.

TARTAR. Encroach upon no man . . . there you have the law. . . .

SAHTIN. With us in Russia it is called, "Code for Criminal Punishment and Correction."

BARON. With another "Code for Penalties Imposed by Justices of the Peace."

TARTAR. With us it is called the Koran. . . . Your Koran is your law . . . our Koran we must carry in our hearts.

KLESHTSCH. [*Tries the accordeon.*] Don't be forever hissing, you beast. What the prince says is right. . . . We must live according to the law . . . according to the gospels. . . .

SAHTIN. Live so.

BARON. Try it.

TARTAR. Mohammed gave us the Koran . . . there you have your law, he said. Do, as is written therein. Then a time shall come when the Koran will not suffice . . . a new time with new laws . . . for every epoch has its own laws. . . .

SAHTIN. Yes, of course, our epoch gives us "Criminal Code." A durable law, not so easily worn off.

NASTIAH. [*Knocks on the table with her knuckles.*] Now I would like to know . . . exactly why I live . . . here with you? I shall go . . . anywhere . . . to the end of the earth.

BARON. Without shoes, lady?

NASTIAH. Quite naked, as far as I care! I shall crawl on all fours if you please.

BARON. That would be picturesque . . . on all fours. . . .

NASTIAH. I would do it . . . willingly . . . if I only need not have to look at your snout again . . . ah, how disgusting everything has become to me . . . my whole life . . . everybody.

SAHTIN. When you go, take the actor along with you. . . . He'll soon be going anyhow . . . he has learned that exactly half a mile from the end of the earth there is a hospital for orgisms. . . .

ACTOR. [*Sticks his head out over the edge of the stove.*] For organisms, blockhead.

SAHTIN. For organs which are poisoned with alcohol.

ACTOR. Yes, he will soon be going, very soon! You will see!

BARON. Who is this "he," sire?

ACTOR. It is I.

BARON. Merci, servant of the goddess, who . . . ah, what is she called? The goddess of the drama, of tragedy . . . what is her name?

ACTOR. The muse, blockhead, no goddess, but muse!

SAHTIN. Lachesis . . . Hera . . . Aphrodite . . . Atropos . . . the devil knows the difference between them . . . and our young adorer of the muse shall leave us . . . the old man has wound him up. . . .

BARON. The old man was a fool. . . .

ACTOR. And you are ignorant savages. You don't even know who Melpomene is. Heartless . . . you will see—he will leave you! "Interrupt not your orgy, black souls," as Beranger says. . . . He will soon find the place where there is nothing more . . . absolutely.

BARON. Where there is nothing more, sire?

ACTOR. Yes! Nothing more, "this hole here . . . it shall be my grave. . . . I die, faded and powerless." And you, why do you live? Why?

BARON. Just listen, you—Kean, or Genius and Passion. Don't bellow so.

ACTOR. Hold your snout. . . . So I will, I'll roar!

NASTIAH. [*Raises her head from the table, and waves her arms about.*] Roar forever! They may hear it.

BARON. What is the meaning of that, lady?

SAHTIN. Let her chatter, Baron . . . the devil take them both . . . may they scream . . . may they run their heads together . . . go on . . . it has a meaning. . . . Don't injure others, as the old man said . . . the pilgrim has made us all rebellious.

KLESHTSCH. He enticed us to start out . . . and knew not himself the way.

BARON. The old man was a charlatan.

NASTIAH. It is not true! You are yourself a charlatan.

BARON. Don't chatter, lady.

KLESHTSCH. He was no friend of truth, the old man. . . . He stood with all his might over against the truth . . . and

after all, he is right . . . of what use to me is all truth, when I haven't a mouthful? There, look at the prince. [*Looks towards the* TARTAR.] . . . He has crushed his hand at work . . . now they say, it must come off . . . there you have the truth.

SAHTIN. [*Strikes the table with his fist.*] Be still! Asses! Say nothing ill of the old man. [*More quietly.*] You, Baron, are the biggest fool of all . . . you have no glimmering of sense—and you keep on chattering. The old man a charlatan? What is truth? Mankind is the truth! He had seized that . . . but you have not! You are as stupid as a brick in the pavement. I understood him very well, the old man. . . . He did tell them lies, but he lied out of sympathy, as the devil knows. There are many such people who lie for brotherly sympathy's sake. . . . I know I have read about it. They lie so beautifully, with such spirit, so wonderfully. We have such soothing, such conciliating lies. . . . And there are lies which justify taking the anvil away, and the mashed hand of the toiler . . . which bring charges against the starving. . . . I . . . know these lies. . . . He who has a timid heart . . . or lives at another's table, should be lied to . . . it gives him courage . . . puts a mantle on his shoulders . . . but he who is his own master, who is independent, and lives not from the sweat of another's brow . . . what are lies to him? The lie is the religion of servant and master . . . the truth is the inheritance of free men!

BARON. Bravo! Gloriously said! Exactly my idea! You speak . . . like a man of respectability!

SAHTIN. Why shouldn't a scoundrel speak like a respectable man, when the respectable people talk so much like scoundrels? . . . I have forgotten much, but one thing I still keep. The old man? He had a shrewd head on his shoulders. . . . He worked on me like acid on an old, dirty coin. To his health, let him live! Pour one. . . . [NASTIAH *pours a glass of beer and hands it to* SAHTIN. *He laughs.*] The old man—he lived from within. . . . He saw everything with his own eyes. . . . I asked him once: "Grandfather, why do men really

live?" . . . [*He tries in voice and manner to imitate* LUKA.] Man lives ever to give birth to strength. There live, for example, the carpenters, noisy, miserable people . . . and suddenly in their midst is a carpenter born . . . such a carpenter as the world has never seen: he is above all, no other carpenter can be compared to him. He gives a new face to the whole trade . . . his own face, so to speak . . . and with that simple impulse it has advanced twenty years . . . and so the others live . . . the locksmiths and the shoemakers, and all the rest of the working people . . . and the contractors . . . and the same is true of other classes—all to give birth to strength. Every one thinks that he for himself takes up room in the world, but it turns out that he is here for another's benefit—for some one better . . . a hundred years . . . or perhaps longer . . . if we live so long . . . for the sake of genius. [NASTIAH *stares into* SAHTIN'S *face.* KLESHTSCH *stops working on the accordeon and does nothing. The* BARON *lets his head sink and drums with his fingers on the table. The* ACTOR *sticks his head over the edge of the stove, and carefully crawls down.* SAHTIN *goes on.*] All, my children, all, live only to give birth to strength. For that reason we must respect everybody. We cannot know who he is, for what purpose born, or what he may yet fulfil . . . perhaps he has been born for our good fortune . . . or great benefit . . . and especially must we respect the children . . . the little children . . . they must not suffer restraint . . . let them live their lives . . . let them be respected. [*Laughs quietly to himself. Pause.*]

BARON. [*Thoughtfully.*] For the genius. . . . Hm, yes . . . that brings to mind my own family . . . an old family . . . back to Catherine's time . . . of the nobility . . . knights . . . we came from France . . . and entered the Russian service . . . dignities accumulated on us. . . . Under Nicholas I., my grandfather, Gustav Deville . . . held a high post . . . he was rich. . . . Had hundreds of serfs . . . horses . . . a cook. . . .

NASTIAH. Don't be lying . . . it's all a fake. . . .

BARON. [*Springing up.*] Wh-at? Nyah . . . say more!

NASTIAH. It's all a fabrication.

BARON. [*Cries.*] A house in Moscow, a house in Petersburg! Coaches . . . escutcheons on the coach door.

[KLESHTSCH *takes the accordeon and goes to the side R., where he observes the scene.*]

NASTIAH. Never was such a thing.

BARON. Stop chattering! Dozens of footmen . . . I tell you!

NASTIAH. [*Tantalizing.*] None.

BARON. I'll kill you.

NASTIAH. There were no coaches.

SAHTIN. Let up, Nastenka. Don't make him so furious.

BARON. Wait . . . you wench . . . my grandfather—

NASTIAH. You had no grandfather . . . none.

[SAHTIN *laughs.*]

BARON. [*Sinks back on the seat quite out of breath with anger.*] Sahtin, I tell you . . . the harlot . . . what—you laugh, too? And you. . . . Won't believe me? [*Cries out desperately, striking the table with his fists.*] Go to the devil . . . all was as I say.

NASTIAH. [*In a triumphant tone.*] Ah, ha! See how you bellow out! Now you know how a person feels when nobody believes him.

KLESHTSCH. [*Returns to table.*] I thought we should have a fight.

TARTAR. Stupid people . . . childish.

BARON. I . . . I'll not be made a fool of. . . . I have proof. . . . I have documents to satisfy. . . .

SAHTIN. Throw them in the stove. And forget your grandfather's coach. In the coach of the past nobody gets anywhere.

BARON. How can she dare . . .

NASTIAH. Hear the noise he is making . . . oh, Lord, how dare I?

SAHTIN. But you see, she dares it. Is she still worse than

you? For she has certainly had in her past no coach and no grandfather . . . perhaps not even a father and mother. . . .

BARON. [*Quieting himself.*] Go to the devil. . . . You reason everything out so coldbloodedly, while I . . . I believe I have no temper. . . .

SAHTIN. Make yourself one. It is a useful thing. . . . [*Pause.*] Tell me, Nastiah, do you not go often to the hospital?

NASTIAH. What for?

SAHTIN. To Natasha?

NASTIAH. Why, have you dropped from Heaven? She has long been out . . . out and gone. . . . Nowhere is she to be found. . . .

SAHTIN. Gone? Disappeared?

KLESHTSCH. I would like to know whether Waska got Wassilissa into trouble or Wassilissa, Waska.

NASTIAH. Wassilissa? She will lie herself out. She is crafty. She will send Waska to the mines. . . .

SAHTIN. For manslaughter in a row, only imprisonment. . . .

NASTIAH. Shame. Hard labor would be better. You ought to be sentenced to hard labor too. You ought to be swept away like a pile of trash . . . into a ditch.

SAHTIN. [*Taken aback.*] What are you talking about. You are certainly mad.

BARON. I'll box your ears . . . impertinent hussy.

NASTIAH. Try it once, just touch me!

BARON. Certainly I'll try it!

SAHTIN. Let her be. Don't touch her. Don't insult any one. I always remember the old man. [*Laughs aloud.*] Don't insult mankind, not in her. . . . And if I should be insulted so that my reputation was forever gone. . . . What should I then do. . . . Forgive. No and never!

BARON. [*To* NASTIAH.] Mark you! you: I am not one of your kind . . . you . . . wench. . . .

NASTIAH. Ah, you wretch! You . . . you live with me like a maggot in an apple. [*The men laugh understandingly.*]

KLESHTSCH. Silly goose! A fine apple you are. . . .

BARON. Shall a man get mad . . . over such . . . an idiot?

NASTIAH. You laugh? Don't sham! You don't feel like laughing. . . .

ACTOR. [*Darkly.*] Give him what is his.

NASTIAH. If I only . . . could: I would take you all and . . . [*Takes a cup from the table and smashes it on the floor.*] like that!

TARTAR. What are you breaking the dishes for . . . dunce?

BARON. [*Rising.*] No, I must teach her manners.

NASTIAH. [*Going out.*] Go to the devil.

SAHTIN. [*Calls after her.*] Let up, will you? Why do you treat her so? Will you frighten her?

NASTIAH. You wolves! It is time you were dead.

[*Exit L. U. E.*]

ACTOR. [*Darkly.*] Amen!

TARTAR. Ugh, mad folks these Russian women! Hussies, unmanageable. The Tartar women are not so, they know the law.

KLESHTSCH. She must be given something that she will remember.

BARON. A low-born creature.

KLESHTSCH. [*Tries the accordeon.*] Ready, and your owner is not to be seen. . . . The boy is a lively one.

SAHTIN. Now have a drink!

KLESHTSCH. [*Drinks.*] Thanks! It is time to be turning in. . . .

SAHTIN. You'll fall in with our habits after awhile, eh?

KLESHTSCH. [*Drinks and goes to the bunk in the corner.*] If I do. . . . Everywhere, in the long run, people are to be found. . . . You do not see them at first . . . but later, when you see truer, people are to be found everywhere . . . and they are not so bad after all. . . .

[*The* TARTAR *spreads a cloth out over the bunk, sits down and prays.*]

BARON. [*To* SAHTIN, *pointing to the* TARTAR.] Just look.

SAHTIN. Let him alone. . . . He is a good fellow. . . . Don't disturb him! [*Laughs aloud.*] I am so chicken hearted today. . . . The devil may know what's coming.

BARON. You are always a little chicken hearted when you have some spirits in you . . . and rational then.

SAHTIN. When I am drunk everything pleases me. Hm—yes. . . . He prays? Very beautiful of him. A man can believe or not believe . . . that rests with him. Man is free . . . he is responsible to himself for everything: for his belief, his unbelief, his love, his wisdom. Man himself bears the cost of all, is therefore—free. . . . Man—that is the truth! But what's man? Not you, nor I, not they—no, but you, I, old Luka, Napoleon, Mohammed . . . all in one . . . is man. [*Draws in the air the outline of a man's form.*] Comprehend! It is—something huge, including all beginnings and all endings . . . all is in man, all is for man. Only man alone exists the rest is the work of his hand and his brow. M-an! phenomenal. How loftily it sounds, M-a-n! We must respect man . . . not compassion . . . degrade him not with pity . . . but respect. Drink we, to the health of man, baron. How splendid it is to feel yourself a man. I . . . I, a former convict, a murderer, a cheat . . . yes, when I pass along the street, the people stare at me, as though I were the most desperate of thieves . . . they get out of my way, they look after me . . . and often say to me, thief, why don't you work? . . . Work? What for? To become satiated. [*Laughs aloud.*] I have always hated those who eat themselves to death. It comes to nothing, baron, to nothing. The man is the principal thing, man stands higher than a full stomach.

[*Rises from his place.*]

BARON. [*Shakes his head.*] You are a contemplator . . . that is wise . . . that warms my heart. . . . I can't do it. [*Looks around carefully and continues in a lower tone.*] I am sometimes afraid, brother . . . do you understand? I fear what may come next.

SAHTIN. [*Goes up and down.*] Nonsense, what shall man fear?

BARON. As far back as I can remember, it always seemed to me as though a fog lay on my brow. I never knew very well just what was the matter, was never at ease. . . . I felt as if my whole life long I had only put on my clothes and taken them off again . . . why? No idea! I studied. . . . I wore the uniform of an institute for the nobility . . . but what I have learned, I don't know. . . . I married . . . put on a frock coat, then a night gown . . . selected a detestable wife—why? I don't understand. . . . I went through everything—and wore a shabby gray jacket and red-fuzzy trousers . . . but I finally went to the dogs. Hardly took any notice of it. I was employed at the Kameral Court . . . had a uniform, a cap with cockade. . . . I embezzled government money pulled on the convict's jacket . . . then—what I have on now . . . and all . . . as if in a dream . . . funny, eh?

SAHTIN. Not very. . . . I find it rather foolish.

BARON. Yes. . . . I think it was foolish. . . . But I must have been born for something . . . eh?

SAHTIN. [*Laughs.*] It is possible. . . . Man is born to give birth again to strength. [*Nods his head.*] Yes . . . fine idea.

BARON. This . . . Natasjka. . . . Simply ran out. . . . I will see where she has hidden. . . . Still, she. . . .

[*Exit L. U. E. Pause.*]

ACTOR. You Tartar! [*Pause.*] Prince! [*The* TARTAR *turns his head.*] Pray for me.

TARTAR. What do you want?

ACTOR. [*Softly.*] You must pray . . . for me. . . .

TARTAR. [*After a short silence.*] Pray for yourself.

ACTOR. [*Climbs quickly down from the stove, mounts the table, pours a glass of whiskey with trembling hand, drinks and goes out hastily, almost running, L. U. E.*] Now, I go!

SAHTIN. Heh, you Sigambrer! Where to?

[*He whistles.*]

[MEDVIEDEFF *in a woman's wadded jacket, and* BUBNOFF, *enter R. U. E.* BUBNOFF *carries in one hand a bundle of pretzels, in the other a couple of smoked fish, under*

his arm a bottle of whiskey, and in his coat pocket a second.]

MEDVIEDEFF. The camel is . . . a sort of ass, so to speak. Only it has no ears.

BUBNOFF. Let up! You yourself . . . are a sort of jackass.

MEDVIEDEFF. The camel has no ears at all. It hears with the nostrils.

BUBNOFF. [*To* SAHTIN.] Friend of my heart, I have searched for you in every barroom and dive. Take the bottle out, my hands are full.

SAHTIN. Put the pretzels on the table and then you will have a free hand.

BUBNOFF. That's right . . . you know the law . . . you have a sly head. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. All scoundrels have sly heads. . . . I know that . . . long. How could they catch anything without slyness? A law-abiding citizen can be stupid, but a thief must have brains in his head. But about this camel, brother, you are wrong there . . . a camel is a sort of riding deer, I say . . . it has no horns . . . and no teeth, either. . . .

BUBNOFF. Where's the whole crowd hiding? Nobody here. Say, you, come out. . . . I treat today . . . who sits there in the corner?

SAHTIN. You have already spent almost everything, scarecrow.

BUBNOFF. Of course, this time my capital was small . . . which I had scraped together. . . . Krivoi Zoba! Where is Krivoi Zoba?

KLESHTSCH. [*Steps to the table.*] He is not there.

BUBNOFF. U-u-rrr! Bull dog. Brrju, Brlyu, Brlyu, turkey cock! Don't be barking and snarling! Drink, fast, don't let your head hang. . . . I invite all, freely. I love to do that, brother! If I was a rich man, I would have a barroom in which everything would be free, by God, with music and a choir of singers. Come, drink, eat, do you hear, quicken your souls. Come to me, poor men, to my free barroom, Sahtin!

Brother! I would you . . . there, take half my entire capital, there take it.

SAHTIN. Oh, give it all to me. . . .

BUBNOFF. All? My whole capital? Do you want it? . . . There! A ruble . . . another . . . twenty . . . a couple of fivers . . . a pair of two copec pieces . . . that is all!

SAHTIN. Lovely . . . I'll keep it safely. . . . I'll win my money back with it.

MEDVIEDEFF. I am a witness . . . you have given him the money in trust . . . how much was it, though?

BUBNOFF. You? You are—a camel. . . . We need no witnesses.

ALYOSCHKA. [*Enters L. U. E. with bare feet.*] Children! I have gotten my feet wet!

BUBNOFF. Come—get your gullet wet . . . to balance matters. You're a lovely boy, you sing and make music . . . very clever of you! But—drink . . . not too much! Guzzling is very injurious, brother . . . very injurious. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. I see that in you . . . you only look like a man after you have gotten drunk. Kleshtsch! Is my accordeon mended? [*Sings and dances with it*]

If I were not such a tasty boy,
So lively, fresh and neat,
Then Madam Godfather would
Never again call me sweet.

Frozen stiff, children. It is cold.

MEDVIEDEFF. Hm—and if I may be bold enough to ask: Who is Madam Godfather?

BUBNOFF. You . . . are not interested in that! You have nothing to ask here now. You are no policeman any more . . . that's a fact. Neither police nor uncle. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. But simply, auntie's husband!

BUBNOFF. Of your nieces, one sits in prison, the other is dying. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Expands his chest.*] That is not true: She is not dying. She has simply gone away!

[SAHTIN *laughs aloud.*]

BUBNOFF. Quite true, brother! A man without nieces—is no uncle!

ALYOSCHKA. Your excellency, the pensioned drum-major of the belly brigade.

Nary a single cent have I,
While Madam Godfather has money,
But still I'm nice, I'm very very nice,
I'm as nice and as sweet as honey.

Brr, it is cold.

[KRIVOI ZOBA *enters, then, until the end of the act, couples, men and women, enter, undress themselves, stretch out on the bunks and grumble to themselves.*]

KRIVOI ZOBA. Why did you run away, Bubnoff?

BUBNOFF. Come here and sit down. Let's sing something, brother! My favorite hymn, eh?

TARTAR. It is night now, time for sleeping. Sing during the day.

SAHTIN. Let them sing, prince, come over here.

TARTAR. Let them sing—and then a row. . . . You sing and they fight.

BUBNOFF. [*Going to him.*] What's the matter with your hand, prince? Has somebody cut it off?

TARTAR. Why cut it off? Let us wait. . . . Perhaps it will not be necessary to cut it off . . . a hand is not made of iron . . . cutting off is an easy thing to do. . . .

KRIVOI ZOBA. It is a bad job, Hassanka! What, are you without a hand? In our business they only look at the hands and the back. . . . A man without a hand is no man at all! Might as well be dead. Come, drink a glass with us.

KVASCHNYA. [*Enters L. U. E.*] Ah, my dear tenants. Biting cold outside, slush . . . and raw. . . . Is my policeman there? Heh, there, Commissioner!

MEDVIEDEFF. Here I am.

KVASCHNYA. You have my jacket on again? What is the matter with you? You have been having a bit, eh? That don't go.

MEDVIEDEFF. Bubnoff . . . has a birthday . . . and it is so cold, such slush. . . .

KVASCHNYA. I'll teach you . . . such slush. . . . But don't forget the rules of this household . . . go to bed. . . .

MEDVIEDEFF. [*Exit R. to kitchen.*] To bed! I can. . . . I will . . . it is time. [*Exit.*]

SAHTIN. Why are you . . . so strict with him?

KVASCHNYA. There is nothing else to do, dear friend. A man like that must be closely reined. I did not marry him for fun. He is military, I thought . . . and you are a dangerous lot. . . . I, a woman, would be no match for you . . . now he's beginning to souse—no, my boy, that don't go.

SAHTIN. You made a bad selection in your assistant. . . .

KVASCHNYA. No, wait—he is all right . . . you will not get me . . . and if you did, the honeymoon would not last over a week . . . you'd gamble the clothes off my back.

SAHTIN. [*Laughs.*] That's no lie, I would lose you. . . .

KVASCHNYA. So, then. Alyoschka.

ALYOSCHKA. Here he is. . . .

KVASCHNYA. Tell me, what gossip have you been spreading about me?

ALYOSCHKA. I? Everything! I tell everything that can honestly be told. What a woman! say I. Simply an astonishing woman. Flesh, fat, bones, over three hundred weight, and brains, not half a grain.

KVASCHNYA. Nyah, you lie, my young man, I have quantities of brain. . . . No—why do you tell folks that I beat my policeman?

ALYOSCHKA. I thought, because you tore his hair out . . . that is as good as a beating.

KVASCHNYA. [*Laughs.*] You are a fool! Why carry such dirt out of the house? . . . that has grieved him sorely . . . he has taken to drink from worry over your gossip. . . .

ALYOSCHKA. Listen: It is therefore true, what the proverb says: that the hen has a throat for liquor.

[SAHTIN *and* KLESHTSCH *laugh.*]

KVASCHNYA. But you are witty: and tell me, what sort of animal you are, Alyoschka?

ALYOSCHKA. I am a fellow who fits snugly into the world. The finest of the finest sort! A regular jack of all trades. Where my eye turns, there my heart follows.

BUBNOFF. [*On the* TARTAR'S *bunk.*] Come, we will not let you sleep. Today we'll sing . . . the whole night, eh, Krivoi Zoba?

KRIVOI ZOBA. May we?

ALYOSCHKA. I'll play for you. . . .

SAHTIN. And we will hear it.

TARTAR. [*Grunting.*] Nyah, old satan, Bubna . . . pour me a glass: "We'll revel, we'll drink until death gives the wink."

BUBNOFF. Pour him one, Sahtin! Krivoi Zoba, sit down! Ah, brothers! How little a man needs! I, for example, I've only had a couple of swallows . . . and walk tangle footed. Krivoi Zoba, strike up . . . my favorite song. I will sing and weep.

KRIVOI ZOBA. [*Sings.*] "Though still the sun goes up and down. . . ."

BUBNOFF. [*Falls in.*] "No gleam can pierce to me in here."

[*The door is jerked open.*]

BARON. [*On the platform, crying.*] Heh, there . . . you! Come quick . . . come out! In the yard . . . there . . . the actor . . . has hanged himself!

[*Silence, all stare at the* BARON. *Behind him appears* NASTIAH, *who with staring eyes goes to the table.*]

SAHTIN. [*Softly.*] He must spoil our song . . . the fool.

CURTAIN

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

NOTES ON AUTHORS

SOPHOCLES, the second of the great tragic poets of ancient Greece, was born at Colonus, near Athens, about 496 B.C. He won first place over Æschylus in the dramatic competition in 468 B.C., and about twenty times thereafter. Sophocles took some part in public life, both as statesman and soldier, in addition to becoming the most popular of the tragic poets. He died about 406 B.C. Of the hundred dramas which Sophocles is supposed to have written only seven are extant: *Antigone, Œdipus Rex, Œdipus Coloneus, Ajax, The Trachinæ, Philoctetes,* and *Electra.*

EURIPIDES, the last of the great classical writers of tragedy, was born about 486 B.C. and died in 406 B.C. Of the eighteen extant plays of Euripides the most important are *Medea, Hippolytus, Iphigenia among the Taurians, Iphigenia at Aulis, Electra,* and *Alcestis.*

JEAN RACINE was born in 1639, about thirty years after Corneille and fifteen years after Molière. He was educated for the church in the famous Jansenist school at Port Royal, but his interest in literature and the theatre was too strong to be denied. He began to write for the theatre when he was about twenty-five years old, taking the form laid down and practiced by Corneille as a model and producing his first dramatic pieces in Molière's theatre. He scored his first triumph in 1667 with *Andromache* and during the next ten years produced all his important dramas, *Britannicus, Berenice, Bejazet, Mithridates, Iphigenia,* and *Phædra.* Falling into disfavor with Louis XIV about this time, he was widely attacked, and gave up the drama, composing only two more plays, written some years later for Mme. de Maintenon. He died in 1699, having resumed his Jansenist connections some years before.

SHAKESPEARE. Because of the great amount of biographical material available, a sketch of Shakespeare's life is not included here. A valuable handbook of information on Shakespearean topics is Neilson & Thorndike's *Facts about Shakespeare* (Macmillan, New York, 1913). The standard biographies are by Sir Sidney Lee (Macmillan, New York, 1913), and J. Q. Adams (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1923).

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, the son of a country gentleman, was born in Sussex in 1792. He went through Eton and entered Oxford, but was expelled from the university for publishing a pamphlet on *The Necessity of Atheism.* His first marriage, contracted with a girl of sixteen, was unhappy and tragic in its consequences; his second was with the daughter of William Godwin, the social philosopher, who outlived him. With her in 1818, Shelley went to Italy, and here he remained until his death in 1822. On an afternoon in July of this year his boat was capsized in the Bay of Spezzia; Shelley's body was washed ashore, cremated in the presence of Trelawney and Byron, and the ashes were placed in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, near the grave of Keats. Shelley's other drama, *Prometheus Unbound,* is equally famous with *The Cenci* as an example of the closet drama of the nineteenth century.

HENRIK IBSEN was born in 1828 at Skien, Norway. He served an apprenticeship to an apothecary, and then studied at the University of Christiania, beginning his literary career about this time. For seven years he directed theatres there and in Bergen, but departed for Germany in 1864, where, except for a short period, he made his home until 1891. At this time he returned to Christiania, remaining there until his death in 1906. His life was marked by trials and struggles, first with poverty and later with the social forces against which he had to contend to gain recognition. He succeeded, however, in time to enjoy many years of popularity, and his death was felt as a national calamity in Norway.

Ibsen wrote twenty-four plays. The first six were poetic dramas dealing with legendary tales of Scandinavian history; two, *Brand* (1866) and *Peer Gynt* (1867), are quasi-philo-

sophical; the rest are comedies and tragedies of contemporary life, for the most part realistic but, towards the last, showing decided influences of symbolism. A selected list of his social dramas follows: *The Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *An Enemy of the People* (1882), *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Rosmersholm* (1886), *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and *The Master Builder* (1892).

GERHART HAUPTMANN was born in Silesia in 1862. He was educated at schools in Breslau and Jena. His first interest was in sculpture. He has written a number of novels as well as about thirty plays. His first plays were produced by the Free Stage Society, with which Hauptmann was connected during his few years of residence in Berlin. Selected plays: *Before Dawn* (1889), *Lonely Lives* (1891), *The Weavers* (1892), *The Beaver Coat* (1893), *The Assumption of Hannele* (1893), *The Sunken Bell* (1896), *Drayman Henschel* (1898), *Michael Kramer* (1900), *Poor Heinrich* (1902), *Rose Bernd* (1903), *The Rats* (1911), *Gabriel Schilling's Flight* (1912).

ALEXEI MAXIMOVITCH PIESHKOV (MAXIM GORKI) was born in Russia in 1868, and for twenty years lived the life which he describes in his plays and stories, as a beggar, vagabond (out of this life comes his pseudonym, Maxim Gorki, "Maxim the Bitter"), and jack-of-all-trades. He first became known, during the eighteen-nineties, as a novelist and story writer, achieving considerable fame through his stark pictures of the lower classes and his revolutionary activities, on account of which he was forced to flee the country in 1905. He returned for a short time after the revolution but soon quarrelled with the officials of the Soviet and gave up the editorial post to which he had been appointed. He has since resided in Germany and Italy, where he seems to have abandoned the drama to devote himself to several volumes of autobiography. The titles and dates of some of his plays follow: *The Middle Class* (1901), *A Country Home* (1903), *Children of the Sun* (1905), *Barbarians* (1905), *Enemies* (1906), *Children* (1910).

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